WOMEN WAR WORKERS

ACCOUNTS CONTRIBUTED BY REPRESENTATIVE WORKERS OF THE WORK DONE BY WOMEN IN THE MORE IMPORTANT BRANCHES OF WAR EMPLOYMENT

EDITED BY

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WITH A FOREWORD BY

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Foreword

I FEEL that praise of women's work in this war would perhaps come more fittingly from one of the other sex. But no one who has been among women workers, as I have, can fail to appreciate what they have done and are now doing in the common cause.

They are not given to self-advertisement; the girl-worker in a high-explosive factory who goes home every night with clothes stained yellow has no need to tell any one what her share in the struggle is. Neither is any one who has seen a bus-conductress at the end of a day's work likely to forget that women do 'man's work.' I have talked to practically a whole street of women, widowed or bereaved by a naval engagement, and met with nothing but high courage; and of all parts played by women in this war surely none is harder than this.

The truth is, this is not a 'men's war,' as wars have been hitherto, but one in which both sexes throughout the Empire must share the

burden and responsibilities. That much was plain when Edith Cavell, a nursing sister, was led out and shot by German soldiers. And this, "our manifold duty and service," is now being recognized by a great and ever-increasing army of women, in the ways that are outlined so admirably in this book.

F. GWENDOLINE JELLICOE

THE MALL HOUSE
ADMIRALTY, S.W.
February 1917

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Editor's Preface

THE purpose of this book is to place before the public a microcosmography in which woman replaces man, and in which the view-point is war work rather than peaceful endeavour or personal characteristics. Even when the outlook is so limited the scope of women's war work is so widespread, its problems are so novel and complex, that it is impossible to deal with every aspect of the subject; consequently an account of certain representative forms of work alone has been attempted, though in a later part of the book facts relating to other branches of the subject than those described in detail have been given in order that a proper appreciation may be had of the various organizations and movements which this war has created among women.

In those days of peace, so near in point of time, so remote in point of sense and feeling, any such book as the present would have conjured up in almost every mind the anticipation that here was a new pamphlet on women's

suffrage. Those days have passed. This account of women's work contains no trace of party politics, for the average man and woman of the England of to-day can paraphrase Maeterlinck's words and say, "There are no party politics." Women have arisen in their millions, not only in England but in every warring country, allied and enemy alike, to take up the burden of work temporarily laid down by the men who have gone forth to fight, many, alas! never to return. This burden has been taken up with no ulterior motives, but with singleness of purpose and in pursuance of the duty these heavy times have laid on all of us each to do such service as the circumstances of life may permit, without struggling either for preferment or power, without asking praise or wealth, always acknowledging that they who risk life and limb in their country's cause come first in the minds and hearts of their fellow-citizens.

Yes, it is fellow-citizens, and not merely fellow-countrymen, in future. Woman has won her place in the State and has gained the gratitude of man, for her work has been done readily

and without compulsion. Even as in far-off Russia the peasant woman whose man has gone to the war has taken up his task of sowing the seed and gathering the harvest, so in placid, prosperous England, as one arm-chair by the fireside has become vacant, so the other arm-chair has become vacant also, and the woman, equally with the man, has performed her duty. Sometimes her task is the pleasant one of administering social comfort to the war-worn soldier, sometimes it is hard or tiring or dangerous. As recently as December 18th, 1916, General Sir Douglas Haig communicated to the troops a special order of the day in the following terms :

" The Commander-in-Chief desires to bring to the notice of the troops the following incident, which is illustrative of the spirit animating British women who are working with us for the common cause :

" One night recently a shell burst in a shop at a filling factory in which the great majority of the workers are women. In spite of the explosion the work was carried on without interruption, though several women were killed

and others seriously wounded. The remainder displayed perfect coolness and discipline in dealing with the emergency. As the result of their gallant and patriotic conduct the output of munitions was not seriously affected.

"The Commander-in-Chief feels sure that the Army will appreciate and be inspired by this splendid example of the loyalty and determination with which their comrades in the munition factories are helping toward victory."

Munition work is, indeed, the form of work most nearly connected with war on its offensive side, and is perhaps the most dangerous type of work open to women, though such books as *The Cellar House of Pervyse* show that women have not shirked the dangers and privations of the firing-line. On the other side, the merciful side of war, women have indeed taken a place which could never have been adequately filled by men, and, as nurses, have shown a contempt for danger and a fortitude of body and of soul not surpassed even by the soldiers to whom they have ministered. Up and down the land and in every territory where there has been fighting, women, often gently nurtured,

women unused to hard work, have faced repulsive duties and death itself in caring for the wounded and the sick.

It must not be thought, however, that the scope of war work is to be measured by those employments which directly impinge on the war itself. The bank clerk working his twelve or fourteen hours a day and carrying the burden of two ordinary men may not be an heroic figure, but he is doing the best he can in the circumstances; and so it is with women who have gone out into every sphere of activity. It has been England, this country of ours, which the Tsar of All the Russias refers to as Mighty England in his inspiring messages to his troops, that has borne the chief financial burden in this war upon the Allied side. The stream of gold which has flowed from our coffers by the thousand million, without stint, without regret, so only that victory be won, could not continue to flow unless the businesses which have made this country mighty could keep going, unless our railways could be run, unless our land could be sowed and the harvests garnered. No insignificant part of the great

duty of 'carrying on' has fallen to the lot of women.

Our great insurance offices, representing hundreds of millions of pounds in capital, and the difference between ruin and financial security to millions of people, are to-day mainly staffed by women. In this as in other kinds of employment women have not, as a rule, reached positions of great responsibility. They are in the vast majority of cases the hewers of wood and drawers of water in the industrial world. Their work is none the less necessary and valuable. To expect any individual of either sex to spring from inexperience into leadership at a bound is to expect the impossible and to invite disaster. No such expectation was held and no such fool's leap made, but women are already mastering their tasks, and a few of the more brilliant are already climbing the ladder of industrialism and of finance. The first woman bank-manager has already come.

As in trade and finance, so in the work requiring manual labour, women have not been backward. Many thousands of workers have been sent out by various organizations to help

the farmers. It may be that in some instances the hard duties thus undertaken were not fully carried through. A class used to the ball-room and the drawing-room does not readily or quickly adapt itself to a life exacting and toilsome, though healthy, but in the main women did their best and saw to it that it was a best worth doing, and worked like any peasant for the peasant's wage and through a peasant's hours.

In the same spirit women drawn almost exclusively from the labouring classes have been drafted to our railways and our shipyards, and are to be seen to-day toiling at labours which in times of peace called for the muscles of strong men trained to work. Even the skirt has gone, and in their workaday smocks and trousers, garbed like men, they have acted their part. So day after day our railway rolling-stock has been cleaned and preserved, our passenger traffic rendered possible, our goods service conserved. In the great yards where engines and machines and ships are being built increased output has resulted. Not a crane has ceased to swing, not a hammer has failed

to crash, in the absence of human guidance, upon the tortured piece of metal destined to form some part of engine or ship. The lathes still turn, not at their old speed and in their old number, but with redoubled speed and in quadrupled number. Cunning steels have been devised to stand the strain, and willing hands are present to guide the tool as it fashions its little part of the mighty machine that lumbers along slowly toward victory.

For it is moving toward victory, and it is being helped onward, not only by men, but also by women. There are no frightened arms hanging like a sentimental weight round the necks of fighting men, but willing muscles pulling with men's at the mighty tug-of-war. Toward the end of 1916 the German Chancellor, speaking in the Reichstag, could lament that England had outpaced Germany in the race for munitions. What indeed does this prove? Germany, a country of seventy millions of people, industrial to her finger-tips, organized as never State was organized for war, with false factories prepared in time of peace to turn out munitions of war with forced labour wrung

from unwilling prisoners in defiance of every law of war, with captured civilians forced to work like slaves in defiance of every dictate of civilization and humanity, with one merciless will bent solely upon the work of conquest —Germany has been outdone, not by a nation whose man-power is still intact, but by a country that, like her, has parted with her sons. Though Germany has eight million men in the field we have an equal proportion of our population serving in our armies and our Navy, and we have passed her, and with united effort and so long as all men and women left clench their teeth and say, "We will do our best and our utmost," we shall hold the lead.

And what does this portend? The great day when we with our Allies can claim final and decisive victory in the field—for though the Victory of the Marne was decisive in one sense, it was not final—is not yet, but pressure is telling. The pressure exerted by our incomparable Navy, by the heroic Allied armies, and by the resulting economic want, is being felt. The feet of the men holding the other end of the rope are slipping. It but remains

for all the women who are working, and all the women who can work but are not (if such there be), to redouble their efforts, and with one final pull bring the enemy to the ground.

Until that happy consummation be reached, munitions must flow in an unending stream, the gold and silver bullets must rain, and, I fear, the nurse and the ambulance-driver will have their energies still further taxed. Still the dawn is breaking. The first words of peace have been spoken, in pride and hatred it may be, but still they have been spoken by the nation whose old gods were to arise and shatter to bits the Houses of our God. They have been spoken in the name of humanity by the people who sacked Louvain and butchered the women and children of Dinant, who shouted with joy when the *Lusitania* went down with her precious human freight. Such words of peace are false and yet speak truly—not of humanity and the German love of peace, but of weakness and the German fear of war too prolonged.

Let it be our part to secure that the war is not too prolonged. Let it be our part to bring it to a speedy conclusion, a conclusion which

will give to Germany *Niedergang* instead of its alternative, *Weltmacht*, for which she has broken all laws, human and divine.

It was partly, indeed, to rouse the readers of this book to the need for work, and more work, that it was conceived. In the articles which follow, however, no further insistence upon this theme will be placed. Insistence is unnecessary when all are so ready to do their part.

A call for the services of workers of all classes and all types is now being made by the Director of National Service. Volunteers must and will come forward by the hundreds of thousands in order that our Army and our Navy may gain for us further victories and a final and conclusive peace, a peace which will lift from our generation and from many generations to come all fear of the horrors through which we have lived. I only hope that this little book will bring more closely home to its readers the great opportunities which present themselves to-day to all citizens of doing something for their country. All cannot fight, all cannot even lend money, but all who are not disabled or infirm can work.

But one thing more. I feel that this book, so entirely devoted to women's work, might have been left to a woman to compile. Yet, indeed, since another of its purposes is to express appreciation for such work, it appears more seemly that a man should be its editor and apologist.

GILBERT STONE

LONDON
February 1917

PART I

WORKS OF WAR AND INDUSTRY

CHAPTER I

Munition Work

WE little thought when we first put on our overalls and caps and enlisted in the Munition Army how much more inspiring our life was to be than we had dared to hope. Though we munition workers sacrifice our ease we gain a life worth living. Our long days are filled with interest, and with the zest of doing work for our country in the grand cause of Freedom. As we handle the weapons of war we are learning great lessons of life. In the busy, noisy workshops we come face to face with every kind of class, and each one of these classes has something to learn from the others. Our muscles may be aching, and the brightness fading a little from our eyes, but our minds are expanding, our very souls are growing stronger. And excellent, too, is the discipline for our bodies, though we do not always recognize this.

Most of us are up at 5 or 5.30 breaking

the ice in our water-jugs. The dark winter mornings are cold and comfortless, but thousands of men are out in the open trenches, and the constant remembrance of them stifles our groans. It is not so bad in the spring-time and summer, for the early morning freshness is sweeter than ever because of the heat and toil to follow. We live together in hostels as a rule, for we find that from union economy results. Moreover, hardships are not so hard when a hundred others are sharing the hardness with you. If Miss Fuse, in the end cubicle, is breaking her ice with her toothbrush handle, it seems easier to creep from the warmth of the blankets and attack one's own with a hatpin. Alone in rooms the very idea is gruesome.

Six o'clock breakfast is a fashionable institution nowadays, but even this alteration has not destroyed the germ of unpunctuality so inherent in our race. It has, however, broadened our minds. Dozens of us who used to button our gloves before leaving the house are now seen running gloveless along the streets devouring pieces of bread and butter as we go. Many of our comrades, on the other hand,

pause at the winkle stalls to take a relish to their breakfasts.

We move in crowds, except when we get jammed, and then we cannot move at all. As we near the factories the roads become congested, and our numbers are still swelling. There is a mad scrum around the trams and omnibuses, and from what one sees daily taking place one gathers that the Government has sadly erred in not recruiting women for the trenches. If the very tram-conductors quail before the gentler sex, how poorly would the Germans fare! At other times, however, we are a cheery, friendly team, and mighty proud of our work. Except in districts where the population is composed solely of ourselves, we meet with sympathy and admiration everywhere. We are not allowed to speak of anything but munition life, and we never do, so that at last even our relations gaze upon us with awe. We come flocking from every corner of the British Isles. Canada and Australia have joined us, and sad-faced Belgium.

Our garments are as varied as our tongues. Some prefer tweeds remarkable for their absence

below the knee, shooting-boots and leather gaiters, but many incline to satin and *crêpe de Chine* of vivid hues, white kid boots, ostrich plumes, and no gloves. The majority, however, are neatly and quietly attired. The few really shabby ones are popularly supposed to be peeresses in their own right. Whether that is so or not it is certain that persons with glittering handles to their names have occasionally entered our ranks. One girl was overheard remarking to another: "Say, young Doll, see that there lydy on the end machine? They do say as 'ow she's a Dook."

Inside the gates we are all on a level. Duchesses or coster-girls, we are crammed into earth-coloured overalls, and hustled and jostled, winked at and sworn at in the most indiscriminate and realistic manner. Any attempt to be lofty about a wink is usually met by yells of delight and a most fearful aggravation of the offence. Occasionally a purple and stuttering winker will realize his mistake and attempt an apology.

The day is long, the atmosphere is breathed and rebreathed, and the oil smells. Our hands

are black with warm, thick oozings from the machines, which coat the work and, incidentally, the workers. We regard our horrible, begrimed members with disgust and secret pride. It is so realistic. Some of us remember our mud-pie days and rejoice. The genteel among us wear gloves. We vie with each other in finding the most up-to-date grease-removers, just as we used to vie about hats. Our hands are not alone in suffering from dirt. The shop sweepers strike one as remarkably faithful and diligent workers, and they never forget a single corner if it happens to be occupied. Their worn brooms tangle themselves among our feet, and their dust-clouds, filled with unwelcome life, find a resting-place in our lungs and noses.

The work is hard. It may be, perhaps, from sheer lifting and carrying and weighing, or merely because of those long dragging hours that keep us sitting on little stools in front of whirring, clattering machines that are all too easy to work. We wish sometimes they were not quite so 'fool-proof,' for monotony is painful. Or life may appear hard to us by reason of those same creeping hours spent on

our feet, up and down, to and fro, and up and down again, hour after hour, until something altogether queer takes place in the muscles of our legs. But we go on. No one notices whether we are tired or not, and in this brutal fact lies the hope of endurance. A little sympathy would cause what is generally known as a 'swound' among the loaded fuses, or instant collapse into the bullet crate. It is amazing what we can do when there is no way of escape but desertion.

The machine shops are remarkable places. Masses of metal prepared by the furnaces are brought here to be crushed and cut and filed into a hundred ominous shapes. Strange and varied machines, set as closely together as possible in rows that leave narrow gangways between, fill the buildings. The first thing that strikes the new-comer, as the shop door opens, is the great wall of noise that seems to rise and confront one like a tangible substance. The crashing, tearing, rattling whirr of machinery is deafening. And yet, though this may seem almost impossible, the workers get so accustomed to it after a little time that they do not notice

it until it stops. The noise of machinery causes considerable confusion to novices who are anxious to hear orders or to give them. They cannot hear what is being said, or what they say themselves.

There is movement everywhere: loaded trolleys threading their ruthless way along the gangways, endless machinery in motion, great wheels revolving, networks of leather belting whirring overhead, grimy workmen, office-boys and foremen moving hither and thither. Here, as in almost every department, the women predominate in numbers. And somehow, in spite of their uniforms of dark blue or khaki, they light up the sombre shops. Splashes of vivid colour meet the eye at every turn, showing up gaily against the black machinery. The overlookers' coats of red and yellow, green and blue, their pink or scarlet bandanas, a knot of bright ribbon here, a gay frock there but half concealed, bunches of flowers blooming in empty jam-jars upon the machines, all help to form a kaleidoscopic scheme of colour. In addition to the material brightness the girls have introduced an atmosphere of cheerfulness

which has surely helped their comrades and themselves to bear the hard strain of long hours by day and by night.

The twelve-hour shift at night, though taking greater toll of nerve and energy, has distinct charms of its own. The world is warm and awake and sympathetic when we creep into it, suffering from internal and mental topsy-turvydom, uncertain who we are or on what day of the week we are emerging. And then, too, we carry with us a slight, pleasant air of martyrdom as we step forth into the night. The first hours seem to go more quickly than the corresponding ones on day work, until at last two o'clock is reached. Then begins a hand-to-hand struggle with Morpheus. Bombs and detonators, were they ever so loaded, would be of little use here. A stern sense of duty, growing feebler as the moments pass, is our only weapon of defence, whereas the crafty god has a veritable armoury of leaden eyelids, weakening pulses, sleep-weighted heads, and slackening wills. He even leads the foremen away to their offices and softens the hearts of languid overlookers. Some of us succumb, but there

Women Shell-making
A. C. Michael

are those among us who will not give in. An unbecoming greyness alters our faces, however young and fresh by day, a strange wilting process that steals all youth and beauty from us—until the morning.

The ordinary factory hands have little to help them keep awake. They lack interest in their work because of the undeveloped state of their imaginations. They handle cartridges and shells, and though their eyes may be swollen with weeping for sweethearts and brothers whose names are among the killed and wounded, yet they do not definitely connect the work they are doing with the trenches. One girl, with a face growing sadder and paler as the days went by because no news came from France of her 'boy' who was missing, when gently urged to work harder and not to go to sleep so often, answered, with angry indignation: "Why should I work any harder? My mother is satisfied with what I takes home of a Saturday."

The machines are easy to work, as a rule, though their mechanism appears fearfully complicated to the uninitiated. Each worker

usually has but two or three movements to superintend, so that carefulness is the only quality the operator must of necessity possess. Even muscle is by no means always required; most of the machines could be worked by children; but close attention and a certain amount of bodily strain are necessary to the maintenance of output. There are, of course, many machines of a more complicated character which require to be tended by semi-skilled operators, but even for these only a short training is needed on each particular machine to enable it to be properly worked. All this is possible because the workers are only responsible for the output, the machines themselves being in charge of trained mechanics who do the repairs and alterations, etc. These 'fitters' have hitherto been men, but for some time now women have been learning this work, and are making a success of it in spite of their relative lack of experience as compared with men who have handled machinery since their schooldays. Each fitter has a certain number of machines under his or her care, and the output depends largely upon

the skill and speed with which this work is done. Fitters are superior persons who draw large wages (at least in war-time) and who treat the rank and file of the unskilled with contempt. If they should chance to be of the bullying type, the girls on their machines may endure considerable suffering from the treatment meted out to them. The incoming of educated women as supervisors, etc., prevents much abuse of this kind, and helps to do away, on the other hand, with the opposite extreme—excessive friendliness.

Engineering mankind is possessed of the unshakable opinion that no woman can have the mechanical sense. If one of us asks humbly why such and such an alteration is not made to prevent this or that drawback to a machine, she is told, with a superior smile, that a man has worked her machine before her for years, and that therefore if there were any improvement possible it would have been made. As long as we do exactly what we are told and do not attempt to use our brains, we give entire satisfaction, and are treated as nice, good children. Any swerving from the

easy path prepared for us by our males arouses the most scathing contempt in their manly bosoms. The exceptions are as delightful to meet as they are rare. Women have, however, proved that their entry into the munition world has increased the output. Employers who forget things personal in their patriotic desire for large results are enthusiastic over the success of women in the shops. But their workmen have to be handled with the utmost tenderness and caution lest they should actually imagine it was being suggested that women could do their work equally well, given equal conditions of training—at least where muscle is not the driving force. This undercurrent of jealousy rises to the surface rather often, but as a general rule the men behave with much kindness, and are ready to help with muscle and advice whenever called upon. If eyes are very bright and hair inclined to curl, the muscle and advice do not even wait for a call.

The coming of the mixed classes of women into the factory is slowly but surely having an educative effect upon the men. 'Language'

is almost unconsciously becoming subdued. There are fiery exceptions who make our hair stand up on end under our close-fitting caps, but a sharp rebuke or a look of horror will often bring to book the most truculent. He will at the moment, perhaps, sneer at the "blooming milksop fools of women," but he will be more careful next time. It is grievous to hear the girls also swearing and using disgusting language. Shoulder to shoulder with the children of the slums, the upper classes are having their eyes prised open at last to the awful conditions among which their sisters have dwelt. Foul language, immorality, and many other evils are but the natural outcome of overcrowding and bitter poverty. If some of us, still blind and ignorant of our responsibilities, shrink horrified and repelled from the rougher set, the compliment is returned with open derision and ribald laughter. There is something, too, about the prim prudery of the 'genteel' that tickles the East-Ender's sharp wit. On the other hand, attempts at friendliness from the more understanding are treated with the utmost suspicion, though once that

suspicion is overcome and friendship is established, it is unshakable. Our working hours are highly flavoured by our neighbours' treatment of ourselves and of each other. Laughter, anger, acute confusion, and laughter again, are constantly changing our immediate outlook on life. Sometimes disgust will overcome us but we are learning with painful clarity that the fault is not theirs whose actions disgust us, but must be placed to the discredit of those other classes who have allowed the continued existence of conditions which generate the things from which we shrink appalled.

In the time of dogs and novels, tennis rackets and golf, and sometimes even a spare hour spent with our babies, we talked of munitions as we had talked before of the North Pole. The papers spoke of shells and tool-setters, of enormous wages and cheery canteens, happy hostels and gay girl-workers, but how one found the key to this useful wonderland we knew not. We were sick of frivolling, we wanted to do something big and hard, because of our boys and of England. When the dreaded

telegram came at last and everything was grey and bitter, we gave up talking and made our way to the lowest level—the gates of the nearest ammunition factory. A sentry looked at us, and we went in. A scrubby little man with a grimy collar smote a grimier fist upon the grimiest of palms. "Take it or leave it," said he, "'tain't nothin' to me. Fifteen shillin's a week and war bonus; hours 6 to 2, or 2 to 10, or 10 to 6. Them's the facts. It's for you to choose." Even when later on we found ourselves, after passing humbly through the local Labour Exchange, doing a twelve-hour shift in a larger factory at higher wages, we decided that the papers were verging on optimism. The shells are very heavy and our hips get rather sore, and our clothes get worn away where the shells rub against them. The canteens are certainly cheery enough. Our comrades are neither prim nor shy. Once, when several of us had been standing on the tables, dancing hornpipes to the accompaniment of numerous penny whistles and hundreds of strained vocal cords, the Superintendent arrived quite pale to request a little less din.

"You know, girls," she said, "this is really beyond the limit."

"Well, miss," said one of us regretfully, "come to think of it, we *was* breathin' a bit 'eavy."

The enormous wages held out by the papers to the clutching hands of mammon-worshippers, as carrots before the noses of recalcitrant donkeys, melt somewhat upon inspection, or rather have a tendency to be given to no one nearer than a friend's sister's niece. However, there is no doubt that we do earn more than women have ever done before. We 'pick up' our three pounds a week and fall into a rage because we were expecting three pounds and tuppence. At the same time living is so very expensive in these days that three or four pounds are not what they seem.

Then there are the Filling Factories.

Whatever sacrifice we make of wearied bodies, brains dulled by interminable night-shifts, of roughened hands, and faces robbed of their soft curves, it is, after all, so small a thing. We live in safety, we have shelter, and food whenever necessary, and we are even earning quite

a lot of money. What is ours beside the great sacrifice? Men in their prime, on the verge of ambition realized, surrounded by the benefits won by their earlier struggles, are offering up their very lives. And those boys with Life, all glorious and untried, spread before them at their feet, are turning a smiling face to Death. We cannot boast—there is nothing to boast about—but we can volunteer for the Danger Buildings. It is here especially, perhaps, that the great call for educated women is most urgent, though they are needed badly everywhere. Why do they not come in their hundreds and use their fine gifts of culture and education for their country and for humanity? It is incredible that any woman worthy of the name can sit still and wait while such great opportunities pass by.

In the Danger Buildings life is rather different from the ordinary munition existence. There is the same rush and excitement, the same weariness and thrill, only it is intensified by the knowledge that we hold our lives in our hands. Those first few days of experience were strange and wonderful. A curious, soul-

baring sense of being haunted by Death coloured the round of daily work. But it faded away all too soon. Loaded fuses, explosive powders, live time-fuses, detonators, bombs, and mines become objects of familiarity, to be handled with more speed than fear. Here we work in small gangs, as a rule, and sometimes even in solitude. The workshops are wooden sheds of varying sizes, some distance apart from each other, so that in case of explosion one shed only shall suffer, if possible. They are connected by 'platforms,' narrow wooden paths raised some way from the ground to prevent grit, etc., coming into contact with the feet of the workers and so getting carried into the sheds. Grit, iron, steel, glass, etc., anything that might possibly cause a spark among the high explosives, is rigorously excluded from the Danger Area. Workers all have to pass through specially arranged changing-rooms, where they are searched. Matches, pipes, jewellery, steel hairpins, etc., are taken away into safe custody. They are furnished with fireproof overalls, and magazine shoes of rubber, canvas, or sewn leather. In some factories

the girls are also provided with hairpins made of brass (a safe metal, of which most of the tools are made), but in others their hair hangs down their backs in plaits, or flowing loose, as they please. The effect is remarkable, as many of the 'girls' are married and middle-aged women. These precautions give an idea of greater danger than really exists. Factories have 'carried on' for years without so much as one explosion. After a couple of weeks, or less, the outcome of living among explosives is a growing habit of carefulness and attention to detail, but fear is abolished. One distinct advantage of the Danger Area is the amount of fresh air one gets, in comparison with the used-up atmosphere of the great machine shops, etc. As the buildings are often so small one can usually control one's own window and door, and sometimes a good deal of going to and fro between the sheds is necessary.

In these regions the workers appear to be drawn largely from the lower grades of society, and here it is that supervision is so badly needed. But among these discolouring, distasteful powders few educated women have

offered their services. If they only knew how they were wanted, desperately needed, they would come eagerly, generously, if simply for the sake of the men who have fallen. Perhaps some would come for the sake of those who have never had a chance to rise. Now is the time to help, and the time to show the mettle we are made of. Are we, with our greater gifts, our loftier ideals, going to hang back from danger and unpleasantness, and let women from the tenements and the slums set us an example of courage and self-sacrifice which we will not follow?

Stained hands and coppery hair—what are these? Do we fear temporary disfigurement when men, for the same cause, are facing death and the horrible and permanent disfigurement of maimed limbs or blinded eyes?

Munition life is the grandest chance that has ever come to us women. Thousands are proving themselves to be worthy, but yet there is room. Let no more join us for the sake of mammon and thus swell the number of those already in our midst who triumph in the calamity of nations. The time will arrive when

peace will be declared and when the soldier will return for his last long leave. The day will come when we shall meet them again as brethren, a day when we shall even understand the terrible mystery of War. But no day will ever dawn to take away the horror of money ill-used, that is stained with the blood of our fellow-men.

CHAPTER II

The Land

AT the beginning of the war many of us —especially those women who were used to housekeeping—had a strong conviction that sooner or later the food supply of this country would be one of the most serious questions to be dealt with. Then the only steps that it seemed important to take were, to practise strict economy in one's own household and to increase production, if possible, in one's garden at home. Even in London, where gardens are neither large nor prolific, I found it possible to grow enough green vegetables for my own household, and last year, in addition, I grew enough potatoes to last for five weeks.

It was soon realized, however, that more than that would have to be done, and that women would have to come forward in large numbers to take the place of men who had been called away.

The Land

At Christmas 1915 I came home, after months of canteen work, very, very tired, and when I had had a rest I began calling at different bureaux and offices to try to find out what was the most useful work that I could do. I came to the conclusion that women were greatly needed for 'the land,' and when at one of the London offices I was asked if I would undertake 'market gardening,' it seemed to me the most sensible thing that I could do, for I already knew a lot about growing vegetables—if more in theory than in practice.

I was told that I would receive 15s. a week, working eight hours a day to begin with. I suggested meekly that I didn't think that I could live on that, but was confidently assured that I could live on 12s. a week "in a cottage in the village." "But," I objected, "the town you are sending me to is not a village, and I don't see any prospect of village prices." However, I couldn't get any further information, the work was waiting to be done, and the only thing was for me to go and find out for myself.

Of course the question of payment is a

difficult one. Work on the land has never been well paid, and with the high prices of commodities prevailing in these days it isn't exactly easy for women like myself who have never had to do anything of the kind before to live on what they earn, but it is interesting to try, and I found that it could be done.

I bought a waterproof and a waterproof hat. I said good-bye to my friends, who told me sadly that I would never be able to stand it, and treated me as though I were going on some adventure in the wilds instead of to the outskirts of a manufacturing town not very far from London.

When I arrived at the other end of the journey I was met by my employer, who said that if I liked he would drive me first to the house where a room had been taken for me, and then up to the place where I would find the other girls working. I eagerly assented, for I was very anxious to learn what kind of an experience I was going to have.

We went to the house—quite a nice house—but miles away from the cottage of my imagination, and I found that four of us would be living

there together, and that we were each to pay 15s. a week for board and lodging.

That was a slight disappointment, for it left absolutely nothing for laundry, or any other little expenses that one might incur—and it was not the last of my disappointments. On our way to the ground my employer told me that he knew there were hundreds of girls wanting something to do, and that was the reason why he was going to employ us, though he expected it would cost him hundreds of pounds! This was very disheartening, and when I arrived and found them all hoeing a large flower-bed, it was even worse. Now this was simply bad luck. But a few hours ago I had left town solely with the idea that my labour was going to increase the food supply; it was somewhat depressing and I began to wish that I hadn't come. I thought that I had better make it clear, from the outset, what my object in being there was. I was smilingly assured that the potatoes would be there ready for us to start in the morning, and that before I had finished them there would be far more potatoes than I had any desire to plant.

I may say at once that this did not prove to be the case, because I didn't mind how many weeks I was doing it.

Things began to improve when the workers came back in the evening and we had our meal together. They were very bright and easy to get on with, and I heard from them that the ground where we were to work was a very large building estate, on which no building could be done at the time, so it was hoped to grow a large quantity of vegetables. I also heard the first—and not by any means the last—discussion about 'pay.' One of them asked me already if I didn't think that we ought to go somewhere else, where we could live for less, but as I had just arrived I thought it was rather too soon to express an opinion. I was surprised that they went to bed before 10 o'clock, but they advised me to do the same as we had to be up in the morning at 6.30 for breakfast at 7.15. It was about twenty minutes' walk to the estate, and we began work at 8. They also told me, and I was very grateful afterward for the advice, to be very warmly clad, as the wind was sometimes very cold in

the early hours of the day, and even though one was working hard one felt its keenness.

The first morning I was up very early, and was very anxious to start before there was any necessity, because I was so eager to find out how I was going to get on—not that beginning ten minutes earlier was going to make the slightest difference! Perhaps at the back of my mind, too, was the doubt as to whether the potatoes would have arrived; but it was all right: they were there, and we commenced to set them straight away. There were two other girls, who did not live in the same house with us, one of whom was the forewoman from whom we took our instructions, so we were six altogether.

Growing potatoes on a large scale can only be made profitable if the plough is brought into use, and just at this time there wasn't a plough available, so we began with some smaller spaces, say half an acre to an acre, and for this we used a dibbler. A dibbler is a tool something like the handle of a spade, with a pointed end, and a bar sticking out about 9 inches from the bottom. You put the point where you

want to make a hole, and then push it down by putting your foot on the bar at the side, at the same time working it round with your hands on the handle. First a line is drawn tightly from one end of the plot to the other, then, quite quickly, along its length one makes the holes with the dibbler. At first one is a little too anxious to get them exactly the right distance apart, but very soon one does it accurately without spending too much time. Into each hole a potato is dropped, and the operation is finished by kicking the earth into the holes, thus making a slight ridge.

That was how I spent my first morning, looking at my watch, I admit, very often, not because I was tired, but because I had been told that I must be tired. When it came to 11 o'clock I was beginning to be very hungry, and it seemed a long time since breakfast, but we had plenty to do so I didn't mind ; but when at 12 o'clock we were told to cease work, I felt that I had never been so hungry before. I think that is probably one of the reasons why one keeps so fit—one always enjoys one's meals so much.

Lunch, which we took with us, was a very jolly meal, and as it was still cold we had it in a little hut, where we boiled water on a spirit-kettle and made tea.

We had an hour—from 12 to 1—and worked steadily again till 5. We finished all the potatoes that had been provided for that day, and then did some digging for about two hours. It was very heavy clay, quite close to a road, and a sapper who happened to be passing stopped to watch for a little while and then asked for my spade. I gave it to him and he dug a little bit, then handed it back, saying quietly: "That is not work for you at all, it is very much too heavy." I tell this, because it was my first day and I felt extraordinarily fit, and I never afterward found any of the work too hard. I was very pleased with myself. I had looked at my watch every half-hour, wondering and wondering how I would be at the end of it, and I suppose I made it ever so much longer, for I was dreadfully afraid of having to give in when I had so insisted that I wouldn't.

After putting away all our tools we went

back to our rooms. It was nearly a quarter to six and I readily joined the others for tea, which we had without any more preparation than washing our hands. We didn't eat much, for our hot meal was at 8 o'clock; what we wanted most was something hot to drink. When tea was over we cleaned our boots in an outhouse and changed from our working clothes, and felt as fresh as anything. But by 9 o'clock I was not anxious to read, or talk, or write much, and although I did not want to go to bed at 10, I felt a disinclination to do anything else, and I understood why the others had gone even earlier.

For a week, I suppose, my work was very much the same. Sometimes we did a lot of weeding and hoeing. Hoeing is tiring at first, as all exercise is that brings into play muscles that are not ordinarily used, but, like everything else, we soon became used to it.

And then there was Saturday—our half-day. I had never realized before how one looks forward to the half-holiday. It may be a remnant of one's schooldays. Saturday was also pay-day, for we were paid when we finished work

at 12 o'clock, and there is something quite exciting in being in possession of money earned, in my case 15s., or, rather, 14s. 9d.—3d. quite rightly being deducted for sickness insurance. I had a childish desire to spend some of it, and I used to invite one of the other girls to have a twopenny cup of coffee with me in the town after lunch, and buy about three or four pennyworth of cheap sweets, which tasted ever so much better than the chocolates of ordinary days.

One morning when we arrived at the ground we found that the plough was there before us, and we were delighted, for we knew that we would be able to get on much more quickly.

The field to be done next was on a slope—22 acres—and the furrows were very long. To give some idea of the length, it took six minutes to walk down them, and over thirty minutes to come up, 'setting' as we came. The plough made the furrows, and then sacks of artificial manure and potatoes were placed at intervals in the field. Before putting down the latter we had to scatter the manure—two kinds, which we mixed with our hands, and carried

in a bucket. On windy days this job was an unpleasant one, for the manure was a fine powder and was likely to blow in our faces, and when it became wet it smelt horribly. On really wet days we did not attempt to manure, but in fine weather I liked the swinging motion, walking up and down the furrows scattering as I went. It reminded me of the old way of sowing grain, which one so seldom sees nowadays.

After the ground had been prepared the setting of the potatoes remained to be done. This consisted in laying them in the furrows an equal distance apart, the spacing depending upon the variety and the crop anticipated.

We filled our baskets from sacks at the lower end of the field and generally carried enough to take us up to the next sack ; there we filled them again, and that carried us to the next, and so on to the top. Arrived there, we walked down an empty furrow and commenced the proceeding over again. It was only when the field was on a slope that it was advantageous to walk down, because it was so much easier setting coming upward. The plough now divided the ridges of earth, and so covered in

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the potatoes lying in the furrows, and there was nothing more to be done for some time to come.

I know that it doesn't sound very exciting, and often, when I have been asked how I liked setting potatoes, I have found it rather difficult to answer. It isn't interesting; I suppose that it is really very monotonous; but I do know that I wanted to do more and more, and that I felt very well indeed, and that there was something particularly satisfying about it. I can't see that it matters—especially at a time like this—whether one likes one's work or not, so long as one can be fairly certain that one is doing what is really necessary. We were all tremendously enthusiastic, and we just worked as hard as we could. This stimulating feeling is not easy to explain, only we felt that here we were really achieving something—something as tangible as making munitions, although we had to wait to see the result. And I don't think that this should be the case only in war-time.

But we were not dull, and frequently there were happenings to amuse us. Billeted in

the neighbourhood there was a large detachment of sappers, who were mending the telephone wires, which had recently been broken down in a heavy snowstorm. Nearly every morning they used to march past the field where we were at work, and one day, to our surprise, they began to sing to a well-known tune some ridiculous words, such as :

Can you plough a furrow?
Can you wheel a barrow?
Can you wheel a barrow up a tree?

They varied the words now and then, and I remember that after Easter, to a hymn tune, they chanted :

Weeding, weeding,
All jolly well weeding!

They were so cheerful and happy. I wonder where they are now !

For the two weeks that we stayed at the same lodgings, too, there were the constant and rather amusing discussions with regard to finance. I think that it wouldn't have been so amusing if we hadn't been so fit that nothing seemed to matter much. To me, personally,

it wasn't important whether I earned my expenses or not, but to some of the others it was a matter of necessity, and for that reason I felt very strongly that those of us who are fortunate enough to be independent have to make up our minds not to accept wages on which it would be impossible for other women to live who are not able to supplement them. We were all paying guests. I have never been a paying guest before, and I didn't particularly like it. I didn't like the food, or think that we had enough of it, but what could one say, with prices continually rising? Fifteen shillings wasn't much in a manufacturing town; and it included one hot bath a week!

Anyway, we were earning 15s. a week and we wanted to live on it, so after a time most of us had to leave our too expensive lodgings and go elsewhere. I was fortunate in hearing of a woman—her husband worked in a factory—who had a bedroom to let, so I went to see her. At first she demurred at taking me, for she hadn't a bath; but when I explained that I didn't expect a bath for the price that I was prepared to pay we soon came to terms. When

I say that I paid 5s. a week it has to be remembered that this was not in the country. I believe that one might get a room in a village for less, but I paid 5s. and was extremely comfortable. Everything was beautifully clean, and they couldn't have been more kind to me. I spent about 1s. a week on laundry, but I could have spent less, and I found that I could have plenty to eat for the remaining 8s. For breakfast I had bacon or fish, bread and margarine (butter was impossible), and tea. For lunch I took bread and margarine, a good-sized piece of cheese, or a hard-boiled egg, or a very little meat, or potted meat, and sometimes a slice of plain cake. With the tea which we made it was a most satisfying meal, and we were always ready for it. Whether it was wet or fine I never failed to enjoy that hour—if fine and sunny, sitting outside; if wet, in the hut, with the spirit-lamp and the prospect of hot tea.

At my new quarters I had the same arrangement in the evening. Tea and bread and margarine when I arrived home, and for my hot evening meal at 8 o'clock, fish or meat—

not much, but I found it quite enough—bread and margarine again, and a cup of coffee.

On Saturday and Sunday I had my midday meal with the people of the house. It was much cheaper for me and less trouble for the wife. I liked the arrangement and they had very good food.

I lived very well on 15s. a week, *but* it doesn't allow for the wear and tear of clothes, and with regard to boots this is a considerable item. If any one is going to do this work for a few months only, I think that a uniform is quite unnecessary—a *very* short skirt does excellently; but one must have very thick boots and woollen stockings, and a waterproof and a waterproof hat are very useful.

One has to be prepared for all kinds of weather, for it changes so. I remember one evening when we arrived back from work I found a letter waiting for me from a friend, who remarked: "How awfully jolly it must be, and how you will be enjoying it! Working out of doors is so good for one." Now it just happened that that day had been

particularly cold and wet and we had worked right through it, and when we did finish we were damp and weary and only too glad that the time had come for us to go back to have tea. As one of our number had said, "I don't feel a bit patriotic, and I don't mind if I never plant another potato!" But the mood didn't last long, and the next morning she was as ready as any of us to go on again. She was an artist, one of the least likely people that could be imagined working day after day on potato-setting, and that she could do it was proof to me that there was something attractive about it; and she looked so much better. Undoubtedly it is a splendid rest mentally. When so many town girls say that they couldn't hoe, or weed, set potatoes, or gather fruit for eight or nine hours a day I only wish that they would try. Though they probably would not like the first week, I think that they would find that they could do it, if they determined to persevere.

Often we were very wet and cold, and sometimes it was extremely hot, and that is even more trying. Some days we could

see the hot air shimmering over the earth. But none of us ever ailed, and a cold was unheard of.

In the summer the early mornings were so beautiful that I often regretted not being out sooner.

It was quite strange going to work in the neighbourhood of a manufacturing town, and to us there seemed to be such a lack of realization of all that the war meant. In London we were beginning to be used to seeing women doing all kinds of work, taking the fares in omnibuses, delivering letters, and so on, but here, though many women were in the factories —and always are—men were still available for all these occupations and there was very little noticeable change. We, and a number of girls who were learning farming in the district, were the object of a good deal of interest and criticism, and it was surprising to see people passing in motors turn round excitedly to look at the 'lady gardeners,' as we often heard ourselves called.

We frequently had a group of spectators watching us work—singularly enough, nearly

always composed of men, generally old men, but sometimes a farm-hand or two. One man in particular came often, for he was convalescing after a serious accident and was unable to work. They were very ready to talk and give their opinions, and one view that they were anxious to impress on us was that a very large profit was going to be made out of the work that we were doing. I had never doubted it, in spite of the gloomy prediction of my employer when I arrived. Another was that we worked too quickly and did not take sufficient rests. But I have also to admit that one day, when we were digging, two small boys, aged about eight, stood for a long time gazing, and then one of them remarked: "They don't work as quick as men." Ready confirmation came from the other: "Not nearly as quick as men." So we must put the one remark against the other, for we may guess that the boys were only repeating what they had heard at home.

I didn't find any men objecting to what we were doing, but I did find that they were afraid of our being taken advantage of. Once, when we had to remove some very stony soil,

the easiest way was for us to use picks and shovels, and the onlookers were very indignant, because "it wasn't women's work and we shouldn't have been asked to do it." Time after time I was stopped by working women whose cottages we passed every day, and asked how we were getting on, and told how they admired our courage. "You've got a good pluck," one old man used to enjoy remarking, and he and others were anxious to know if we were being paid enough, and I had to be very discreet, for I doubted if we were, but we had yet to prove that we were worth more.

I know that we worked consistently and steadily and for our full number of hours each day. If we were supposed to work till 5 o'clock, we did work till then, and afterward put our tools away in the hut, which sometimes was quite a long distance from our work. The experience of our employer was rather different from that of a certain man who engaged twelve women to work for him. Only one arrived, and when he went out, an hour afterward, to see how she was getting on, he found her sitting under a hedge talking to a Tommy!

It was a great disappointment to me that I was unable to help with the later work with the potatoes, but quite unexpectedly and unavoidably I had to give it up. At first I had regretted that my knowledge of growing green vegetables was not to be of use, but when it came home to me that potatoes were possibly of more value to the country I didn't mind in the least, and my weeks of setting them were very happy and very healthy ones, and I would gladly have them over again.

CHAPTER III

A Postwoman's Perambulations

WE Postwomen are a curiously assorted army, ranging socially from the 'tweeny-maid' to the college-bred woman, but having at least two things in common—the desire to do some necessary work, and the physical strength for negotiating endless steps and stairs and for carrying bulky burdens of varying and uncertain quantity.

As with other pursuits which women have had to take up in this time of stress, we seem to have slipped into the work in a calm, businesslike fashion, without materially disturbing the smooth running of the postal machine. True, we were regarded at first with a certain amount of distrust and suspicion by some of the public we were serving. Old gentlemen of no occupation would stand at their windows on the look-out for some peccadillo committed by the new hands, in order that they might send

a ream of protest to the harassed postal authorities or indulge in their favourite pastime of writing complaining letters to the newspapers. Our own sex, too, sometimes took up a critical attitude. One day, when scurrying along with heavily laden bag, delivering letters, I remember well seeing two smart women stop dead to gaze on me with raised pince-nez ; regardless of the carrying power of their voices they opined that it was hardly women's work, and, in fact, thought women could not be trusted to do the business properly ! As these good women were expending their energies in taking shivering and decrepit-looking little dogs for a matutinal airing, I mentally decided that their opinion of my occupation mattered little, and that far from me would be the desire to change vocations with them. On the whole, though, the Postess (as I once heard myself called) has been received amiably and sympathetically enough, with no derision and little grumbling.

Naturally one is precluded, in this place, from going into details of the inner working of the official life, but one can frankly say that, though the advent of the women has apparently

caused some resentment among certain of the men employed, and it is patent that the Postmen's Federation is all a-bristle to prevent any dominance on the part of the women, still, on the whole, the attitude of the postmen to the new-comers has been pleasant enough—but always, be it said, on the understanding that we are only looked on as stop-gaps and not as entering into the work to stay.

The present pay of Postwomen (which is at the rate of 6d. per hour, with an infinitesimal weekly war bonus) naturally is no inducement to women of education to take up the work, though in this as in most other careers education is all to the good, such as in the matter of identifying unusual script, etc. One cannot pretend that the pay, under present cost of things, provides 'a living wage,' but in many offices the women are only employed for the early morning and evening deliveries, so this leaves them free for other occupations during the remainder of the day. In the case of dressmakers, or women following other sedentary callings, who have been engaged in this branch of Post Office labour during the past year, a

marked improvement in physique is to be noticed, the exercise being healthful.

Many wives of men in khaki have taken up the *rôle* of Postwomen, though few of these perhaps from the motive I heard voiced the other day by a woman who was sorting near me. She had been speaking of her husband at the Front to her chum, and finished her confidences by saying, "Well, poor devil, when he is squatting in trench mud it will be nice for him to think that his wife is not lying comfortably in bed, but turning out at five in the morning to 'do *her* bit.'" Though this may not argue a very chivalrous outlook on the part of the unknown spouse, it certainly does express the pleasant spirit of *camaraderie* between husband and wife that these days of toil and strain have helped to bring into vogue.

This rising so early is an unwonted experience for some of us. There are sorting duties to be done before setting out on the rounds of delivery, which necessitate attendance at the office at 6 or sometimes 5 a.m. I thought I knew my London well, but since attacking this war-time work the great city has shown a face

I never knew before. In the early morning, when the only other people in the streets are stray policemen, milkmen, and road-sweepers, there is a quality of freshness and cleanness in the air that strikes one with wonder, and seems reward enough for having to be astir at an unaccustomed hour, at any rate in summer-time. In winter the experience, if more mysterious, is less enticing! In the winter darkness and cold we see picturesque effects of shadowy figures and lantern's gleam that it would take the master-hand of Mr Brangwyn to depict. "Outside a Milk-shop on a Winter's Morn" is a title that suggests great possibilities for a picture. I know not why, but the lights are always on the ground, and irresistibly remind me of a cow-house scene in a Welsh farm-house, where also the shifting lights were planted low and threw weirdly grotesque shadows aslant on the walls. The red-eyed glare of a coffee-stall is the only bit of colour in the silent greyness of the streets, and the focus of a swarm of workers snatching a hurried cup of hot drink. But this early morning peregrination has pathos as well as

picturesqueness. In passing a baker's shop there meets my gaze a cluster of small and ill-clad children crouched on the pavement and in the approach to the shop's doorway. Each one is hugging a battered-looking receptacle in the way of sack, bag, or basket; presumably they are waiting for some bread of yesterday, and they will have a long two hours to wait, this desolate-looking little queue, for the unbolting of the shuttered doors. One wonders what seeds of disease must be sown in these grim morning sittings. Ordinarily the group was solemn as mutes at a funeral, so that it came to me as a surprise on the 1st of April to find an alert disposition for a joke at the hour of 5 a.m. A shrill voice hailed me: "You've dropped yer handkerchief, miss!" Turning round to capture the lost possession, with no remembrance of the sportive date, I saw the little knot of infants convulsed with laughter, while one small tatterdemalion, with skinny arm outspread, yelled: "Yah! April fool you!" Sooth to say I was too pleased to find they could be merry to resent much the ignominious designation, and felt obliged to

join in their laughter. On my first morning round I was accosted by a tiny newspaper boy who, seizing the opportunity of testing untried material with an audacity worthy of Mr Lloyd George, entreated me to carry up with my letters a paper he had to deliver at a sixth-story flat. Thinking possibly the little fellow was late for school, I consented, to his extreme joy, but finding this was to become a daily repeated occurrence, a lecture on the impropriety of undertaking a duty and then delegating it to another struck me as appropriate to the occasion, and the imp has now to hand in his own paper, and possibly thinks Postwomen are of disappointingly unobliging quality. A very much alive young Puck is this same boy, for one morning I overheard his jibe when a muscular young man was busily engaged in cleansing the pavement in front of a shop: "Yah, you! Don't yer know Conscription is a-comin' on."

On entering the busy sorting office from the quiet of the streets one forgets what time of day it is, and quickly takes one's place among the crowd of workers. Sometimes the surroundings

make the Postwoman recruit feel rather like one of a flock of sheep, with the overseer as sheep-dog, for our sorting duties are carried out with great exactitude of regulation as each mail-van arrives with its fresh sacks of correspondence, and the nature of the work obliges the overseer to have an alert eye for any stragglers or shirkers from the sorting-desk fold. Sometimes a ship's deck is brought to the mind, so tidied up and empty does the hall look when letters are just dispatched and there is no cart expected.

When the mails come in every one is at work loading and unloading consignments of missives, where delay for a moment cannot be tolerated. Occasionally the state of the weather or other mischance causes a mail-van to arrive much later than its tabulated time, and it is then that the Postwoman has leisure to observe or talk with her companions, and there is a migration to the room set apart for tea-making, or a clustering round the stove in winter.

As far as I have seen, these women are a happy crowd. Many of them have husbands at the Front, and they strike me *en masse* as

having largely the characteristics of 'Tommy Atkins' himself. One foggy evening, during an unusually prolonged wait for an overdue mail-van, a desire for a waltz was expressed by some one; by way of orchestra a comb and piece of tissue paper were produced by a 'Peter Pan' of a girl, who perched herself up, using one of the sorting troughs as music gallery, and produced sounds of weird portent in squally gusts. Such dance music was never heard before, but couples gyrated round in the solid Post Office boots, with a wary eye on the power in office.

For myself the most unhappy moment of my official life was when I saw the boots we are expected to wear. They are of a weight and of a fearsome rigidity that the foot accustomed to lighter shoes cannot easily endure. Some few of the women wear them readily enough; others complain that they are crippled by them. The pair allotted to me, after a long treatment with oil, which was absorbed greedily, looked as adamantine and unyielding as ever, and I would as lief be clamped in the village stocks as put on this footgear.

Were I the Postmaster-General the women should be treated like the men and have an allowance for shoe-leather, with freedom to purchase the kind of boot that suits the individual wearer. Probably the answer to this suggestion would be that the women would buy flimsy, high-heeled shoes, quite unsuitable for work in all weathers. But really the woman whose vocation calls for much walking may, I think, be trusted not to go about in the tottering, trussed feet of the Chinese image; she will be only too ready to wear serviceable and comfortable shoes befitting her work. But enough about the feet! "A winged Mercury," though, can no Postwoman be styled so long as she has to stump about in these stiff boots. "It takes me a quarter of an hour to lift one foot," said a witty Irishwoman to me one day.

The rest of the uniform is comfortable and sensible, and a good protection from the elements is afforded by the tarpaulin capes and hat-coverings which are supplied. We sometimes long for the time when a little electric lamp can be provided in place of the

unwieldy antediluvian oil lantern which we now dangle at our button-holes at night.

So far, in our office, the Postwomen have not been used for the heavier work of pushing the parcel carts or shouldering the ponderous bags that arrive in the vans, but we are told that the time for these duties is coming as more and more of the postmen are drafted into the Army. Considering the weight of paper that has to be dealt with in the day, this will place no small strain upon those who are unaccustomed to lifting weights, though possibly no greater a one than is borne by the woman who does all her own household work and spends hours over the wash-tub. If scarcity of paper becomes more marked the postal authorities will doubtless find that advertisers may be content to send out their lists and catalogues in less ample form than now ; if this were so there would be an appreciable difference in the burdens to be carried, for it is the trade advertisements that constitute much of the mass of paper that travels through the post.

Had Bacon lived now an essay " On Letter-boxes " would perhaps have been added to

the treasury of his writings. Making acquaintance with the other side of the letter-box is an experience that 'gives one to think,' especially after the experiment of pushing letters into divers rat-trap-like receptacles.

The perambulation of some roads depositing letters is quite as exciting as exploration, and I have one letter-box lid especially in my mind which, in the ingenuity of its trickiness, fills me with awe, and which has committed serious ravages on my gloves, though I don't allow it to "skin my fingers" in the manner graphically described by a fellow-Postwoman the other day. When there are no letters for the house which this horrible letter-box adorns I sing a pæan of praise. Walking up to some lordly portal expecting a generous mouth open to engulf what you have to offer, after much search you often find a slit fit only for the reception of an early Victorian *billet-doux*, and you feel that to thrust in some bulky trade advertisement will be shattering to its sense of reserve and propriety. Architects, apparently, have not, as a rule, given much thought to letter-boxes and the just propor-

tion they should bear to the size of the door. Often the long-suffering Postwoman has a bad time of it when the newspaper boy or girl has been in advance of her and tried to ram the newspapers into the small cavern meant for letters.

Of all the official duties, to me the most *gênant* is collecting the surcharges on insufficiently stamped letters, and since the new postal rates this is a thing of frequent occurrence. At the early morning delivery men in pyjamas and women in dressing-jackets have, to all seeming, to raid every corner of the house or flat to find pennies.

This brings to the mind of the poor Postwoman shivering on the doorstep the parable of the woman and the lost piece of silver—only here the diligent search frequently does not end in the finding of the coin, and a second call has to be made to secure it. In the interests of patient and impatient Postwomen and men might one gently suggest the keeping of some petty cash in the hall for such emergencies? Were I designing an umbrella-stand it would most certainly possess a receptacle for small coin of the realm to be always ready for an

emergency. One writes from the point of view of the Postwoman, though one's sympathies often go out to the poor recipient of a possibly undesired epistle who, forced out of bed by the official double-knock, has to think of cash when in a barely awakened condition. They must feel at such times like the victims on Hounslow Heath must have felt when the highwayman yelled: "Your money or your life!" Memory goes back to a scene in a lone district in Wales where a neighbour of mine declined to open her door to the postman if she were still upstairs. A cord with small basket attached was dangled from the window, and the obliging postman secured the letters in this receptacle, which was then drawn up like a bucket from a well. Woe to him if he did not show quick dispatch over the business! Many are the scolding directions in the vernacular I have heard proceeding from the cowled head looking through the garret window. Well for the London Postwoman that she has no such trials of her patience nor such demands made upon her time.

The mystery of the dark morn is as nothing

Postwomen starting on their Rounds

Copyright, Sport and General

Postwoman receiving Instruction in Clearance of Pillar-box

Copyright, Topical Press Agency

compared with that of the night delivery of letters, when threading one's way along streets whose lamps, if lit at all, are but as an array of masked burglars. The state of war cannot be out of one's mind for an instant; and sad indeed is our plight if we sally forth, like the Unwise Five, without putting oil in our lamps. Lost wayfarers find the Postwoman's lamp as a gleam of hope in their distress, and never an evening passes without our being appealed to for guidance. I used to feel contempt for the policeman who never could direct one anywhere a few yards out of his beat; now my contempt has vanished, for I find a Postwoman on her 'walk' is often as limited as a policeman on his beat, and frequently the inquiring one has to be sent empty away. It sometimes happens that we are unable to meet all the requests that are made to us. Our official duties must of necessity be given priority, and, on occasion, demands are made upon our time which compel us to refuse our aid. The other night an agitated lady begged me to hunt with my lamp along quite a big stretch of streets for

her dropped reticule and, forsooth, take it along to her domicile, adding: "You could deliver your letters later." I wondered whether she would have approved of the Postwoman in her district being whisked off on such an extraneous commission. "Postwoman! You might bring up my milk!" is no unusual call from the denizen of a top flat when the milkman or woman has left the milk on the outside doorstep. And such a thing has been known as to be invited into a strange house to help remove an invalid from one room to another. "You are so strong and you can put your bag down in that corner while you carry her!" Truly the public takes the Postwoman into its confidence. I was requested one morning to give my opinion as to the desirability or not of renting a house in a street where I was leaving letters, this by an utter stranger who had been looking over an empty house.

One article of our uniform is a police whistle. This, though presumably designed for the protection of our letters, fortunately is not often called into requisition, though to some of the women the possession of it gives a comfortable

feeling of safety. In the year I have been on duty I have only once heard of a woman having to sound her whistle, and that occasion was when a man fell down in a fit in a dark street and the aid of the police had to be summoned. The Postwoman's whistle was a godsend to the companion of the sufferer in his emergency.

One pleasing thing about this employment is that the Postwoman usually finds herself a welcome visitor on the doorstep, except when she is in the disappointing position of being the bearer of circulars and advertisements solely ('ads. and circs.' as they are called in sorting-office parlance). In this case, "Oh! we don't want those; they go straight to the dustbin," is a frequent greeting, and the Postwoman is addressed as though she alone were responsible for bringing round the unwelcome baggage. It has never happened to me, though, to go through the experience of a postman in our office who, as he was running down the steps of a house after filling the box with these offending articles, had the whole lot showered on his back by the irate householder! The great British Public is not famous for sitting

on the fence and seeing, metaphorically, into the other backyard or it would realize how the Postwoman has likewise her private grievance against these distasteful bundles. They often cause her to be laden up to the chin when setting out on her round. If, as repeatedly happens, the first calling-place on this round be a block of mansions where perhaps as many as eighty or more steps have to be climbed, whether her cargo consists of bulky circulars or of letters alone makes a vast difference as regards physical strain. As a girl said to me one day, with more directness than elegance, when referring to a glut in drapers' catalogues, "It quite pulls my inside out!" As with a doctor or nurse, so also with a Postwoman, a certain detachment or aloofness from the anxieties of her clients must be observed, or in these days when she is often a harbinger of woe to a household she would be in danger of being overridden with melancholy. In my own rounds (technically called 'walks' in the Post Office) there is many a house where some one is on the look-out for a letter from the Front, and, "Anything from my boy to-day?" is an

eager question that often greets one. After an inquiry like this one is always glad to see an envelope with the magic O.A.S. on it for that particular house. Sometimes a battered returned envelope has to be put in the letter-box, having as grim superscription, " Killed in action," with the additional, and one would think unnecessary sentence, " Undelivered for this reason."

On the whole the advantages predominate over the disadvantages of being a Post-woman, if one is strong. In the office in which I have been employed only one woman has in the course of the year retired from the field.

CHAPTER IV

Banking

THESE are revolutionary times, and nowhere are the changes that the great upheaval of the war has brought more marked than in the banking world. Formerly Woman was an unknown quantity in the sacred precincts of a bank, and Man, who is by nature a conservative animal, looked upon her advent there with frank suspicion, and opposed the innovation with all the strength of his hereditary prejudice against Woman in any *rôle* but that of planet to his sun in the domestic orbit.

But prejudice does not thrive in the electric atmosphere of a world at war, and so, not without many a backward glance at the sheltered ease she left behind her, Woman took her place and started a fresh chapter of her life in the new England.

To do her justice she has shouldered her responsibilities bravely, and she is generally

admitted to have achieved success. In banks she is still on probation, but it is generally conceded that a large proportion of the women now employed there will retain their positions after the war is over. The leading banks collectively employ many thousands of women and girls in almost every branch of bank work. As telephonists and for purely mechanical typewriting and copying they had already been employed some time before war broke out. Now they keep pass-books, act as ledger clerks and cashiers, take charge of securities, and handle bills of exchange—a wonderful development of latent ability. Still, it would be rash to assume that, man for man, so to speak, a woman bank clerk's work is equal in quantity during a given period to that of a man doing similar work. In practice it is often found that two women ledger clerks, for instance, are needed to do the work of the one man previously engaged on the task. But it must not be forgotten that these women have had barely two years' training, while the man has had perhaps six or seven. Latterly there has been a movement in favour of employing

women who have had some sort of experience in clerical work, and at least one great bank has recently decided to consider no applications from girls under the age of twenty-one. Other things being equal, women do better work than girls fresh from the schoolroom. It is worthy of note that a thorough education stands the woman bank clerk in good stead, and those banks which insist upon a reasonably stiff entrance examination find that the necessity for close supervision of the work is considerably reduced.

On the whole, the verdict of bankers on the woman clerk seems to be a favourable one. Experience has proved her to be as trustworthy as a man, and she has been found equally discreet in the matter of guarding the bank's secrets. "In six months' time I shall have the best women's staff in England!" proudly exclaimed the manager of one of the largest banks in the West End the other day—an eloquent tribute which, it must be confessed, was slightly tempered by the fact that a week later he was saying, with blank despair on his face, "I shall go mad!" as

he set to work to remedy the errors of one of his new juniors.

The arrival of women in banks was greeted with mixed feelings by her predecessor and co-worker, the bank clerk proper. It is to be feared that the first feeling was one of slight hostility, which had its root, of course, in the view, widely held by the less thoughtful members of the class in question, that the influx of women could have but one result, namely, the gradual forcing of the men from a field of labour which they had hitherto looked upon as peculiarly their own. But men have always prided themselves upon their sense of fair play, and so the woman clerk, when she entered upon her new duties, met with no silent antagonism, but, on the contrary, a cheerful willingness to help her in every way to surmount the difficulties which confronted her at the outset. Yet, although the men—to their lasting credit—did not hesitate to use in the most generous spirit their superior knowledge and experience to help the women clerks, the *esprit de corps* which binds the men together can hardly be said at present to

extend in equal measure to the women on the staff. The reason is that a man does not look upon a few years spent in a bank as the beginning of a serious career for a woman, but merely as a profitable way for her to spend the time which sometimes hangs heavy on her hands before marriage. The manager of a large London bank recently asked one of his clerks—a man who had been of the greatest possible assistance to the new-comers—what he thought of the capabilities of the various women on the staff. The clerk merely mentioned the names of those he thought most promising, passing the others over in silence. Referring to this incident later, he said: "I shouldn't dream of giving a man away, but with a girl it's different." And this attitude is by no means rare, although it will undoubtedly become more and more rare as the idea of women working shoulder to shoulder with men on equal terms loses its strangeness.

The war has brought many social changes, none perhaps more striking than that which has drawn the married women of the better classes into the ranks of the workers. For the

present this change may be an economic necessity, which nevertheless has serious disadvantages in the dislocation of home life for which it is responsible, but it is quite unlikely that after the war is over all these women, who for the first time have achieved financial independence and have tasted the sweets of liberty, will be willing to return to the old order of things. And if they are willing, the return to domestic duties for many will be an impossibility, for in some cases there will be disabled soldier-husbands to be partly supported; many women will belong to that sad company, the war widows; and even where there is no compelling necessity the more adventurous will be found reluctant to return altogether to the narrow walls of home. As a direct result of the war, too, it is quite clear that thousands of unmarried women will be unable to find husbands and will perforce remain wage-earners. Woman's demand for a wider field for her activities perhaps marks a stage in the evolution of the race. The pages of the past bear witness to her enterprise, and perhaps something of the spirit

of the queens who reigned in the East, of St Hilda, who in the seventh century ruled a community of both monks and nuns in the abbey of Whitby, or of the women-professors of the Middle Ages, animates her still.

The public has accepted the new conditions with equanimity, just as it has accepted other changes of an equally radical kind. And, on the whole, the public has had no reason to complain. It has indeed had cause for congratulation in that there existed this reserve of industrial power which could be pressed into the service of the State, for that the banks do national service cannot be disputed. They alone are responsible for the control of the credit system which at the present time supports the entire social fabric of the community. It is the function of a bank to deal in credit, to withhold it or grant it, as occasion demands, just as it is the function of lesser institutions either to sell their goods or to hold them in stock. Unlike the goods, credit is not a tangible commodity, but it is none the less real on that account. Cheques, bills of exchange, and various

kinds of securities all represent credit, for they are promises to pay a certain specified sum of money, and the actual money concerned in the transaction does not change hands. If this credit system were to collapse the whole structure of commerce would be shattered. Its intricate machinery is the product of the development of the agency of exchange which has replaced the barter of the ancients. The business of a bank is not so much to produce capital as to economize it and direct its flow in the right direction, and to do this successfully requires ripe knowledge and experience.

The English banking system ranks second to none, for it has been reduced by the ability of English bankers to the exactitude of a science, and Germany, a nation which has always prided itself upon its scientific methods, in banking as in everything else, has been left far behind in the race for pre-eminence. Our bankers, by directing the loan fund of the country, are indirectly responsible for regulating its wealth. Our 'paper,' using the word in its financial sense, is the finest in the world,

and would be accepted where Germany's, for instance, would be refused.

The *character* of the borrower is of the utmost importance in a question of granting credit. Thus a banker may refuse an application for a loan if he does not trust the man who asks for it, or 'like' him, as he would say in the vernacular, and allow an overdraft to another in whom he has complete confidence. Yet the first applicant may have ample security to offer and the second none whatever except an unblemished character.

To turn to the consideration of more technical matters, even the ordinary bank cashier must exercise not a little discretion in the performance of her everyday duties. The signature of every client of the bank must be familiar to her, just as she must have an approximate idea of the balance on each account. Women cashiers may now be seen at the counters of the largest banks in the kingdom. And they carry out their duties very ably, although the work is of an exacting and responsible nature and demands not only a clear head but also considerable physical strength. On busy days,

such as Saturdays or the day before a Bank Holiday, a queue of seven or eight people standing at the desk of each woman cashier is not an uncommon sight; yet notes are counted, silver and copper checked, cheques and postal orders examined with the utmost speed and accuracy, and in a few minutes the long queue has melted away and another takes its place. Naturally it is only the most capable and reliable women clerks who find their way to the counter, but in these days of rapid promotion it is not unusual for clerks who have had only eighteen months' training to fill these coveted positions, which in the days before the war were only occupied by men who had been in the service of the bank for many years.

Even women cashiers, however, occasionally fall from grace. There is a classic story of a girl who, while still fresh to her work at the counter of a large bank in the provinces, found herself two pounds short when counting the contents of her till at the end of the day. All her efforts to trace the money failed, and visions of suicide floated before her, only to be rejected, however, as she remembered that she had an

important appointment with her dressmaker the next day. Other expedients, equally desperate, shared the same fate, and finally she cut the Gordian knot of her difficulties by walking out of the bank, having omitted the tiresome formality of informing the manager that she did not intend to return!

The popular idea that the bank clerk, as soon as the bank closes, is free to take train to the suburbs, there to spend the remaining hours of the day in sweet idleness, is a mistaken one. Certainly in peace-time, if all goes well during the day, which he starts at nine, he may, and generally does, leave the bank at about half-past four, but woe betide him if he is a junior and, as he casts his neat column of figures, allows his thoughts to wander to the game of tennis he is looking forward to that evening. At the crucial moment his books will show some hopeless discrepancy, and the luckless youth, aided by a more or less exasperated senior, will be forced to check column after column, page after page, until the figures are correct to the last halfpenny. In this respect, however, he has nothing to grumble at, because to a great

extent his hours depend upon his own powers of concentration while he is doing his work. In war-time, however, the bank clerk, whether man or woman, is a very hard-worked individual indeed. Depleted staffs and a large admixture of only partly trained women clerks throw a somewhat heavy burden upon those who are more fitted to bear it, and as a consequence the fully trained men and women put in many hours of overtime during the week, and draw extra pay accordingly. The closing of the banks at three o'clock instead of four—a war measure which was intended to release men for the Army and at the same time relieve the pressure on the overworked clerks—has not in practice been found to answer either of these ends. Although the hours when the banks are open to the public are shorter than they were, the amount of work to be done remains precisely the same, and has to be completed long after the doors are closed. A still further shortening of the hours with a view to releasing more men for military work has been suggested recently, but this idea is very unlikely to be put into practice because, as

already stated, it would mean greater concentration of the work, and therefore larger staffs —a thing difficult, if not impossible, of accomplishment at the present time.

The fact that, on the whole, the salaries of women in banks are on a lower scale than those of the men may be due to the low standard of efficiency which is all the majority of them can offer as compared with that of the men. Time, however, will remedy this defect. It remains to be seen whether time will be equally kind as regards their salaries. The old contention that a man must be paid at a higher rate than a woman doing the same work because he has a wife and family to support is economically unsound, and leads to the underselling of men's labour because it has to compete with the cheaper and equally efficient labour of women. At the present time women entering the service of banks receive an initial salary of 20s. to 30s. a week, rising by small but fairly frequent increments to £2 a week, while a few of proved capacity earn as much as £3 a week.

The bank clerk, whether man or woman, enjoys peculiar advantages, for the banks

treat their staffs with never-failing consideration, and from their point of view there are only two unpardonable offences. They demand that their clerks' integrity shall be absolutely beyond question and that they shall never disclose private information relating to their clients. Naturally enough, for any breach of these two laws the bank clerk suffers the severest penalties. These are sins for which there can be no forgiveness. On the other hand, when a member of the staff meets with unmerited misfortune the bank will not be found lacking in generosity, and in more than one case recently a clerk who has fallen ill has been paid full salary for many months of absence and has also been the recipient of much kindness of an equally practical nature.

Will women ever be bank managers? The view held by many people is summed up in the concluding remark of a banker of many years' standing who had been discussing this question. "After all," he said, "when one wants any real work done one goes to a man!" Yet the speaker's views on the possibilities of women as bank clerks had on his own admission under-

gone radical changes during the last two years, and were, he asserted, capable of still further modification. As a matter of fact, however, there are one or two women bank managers already in existence. There is, for instance, a tiny branch of one of the great joint stock banks in a little Welsh town where the manager is a woman. This looks at first sight as though the vexed question had already been settled. But this is not the case. There is all the difference in the world between the responsibilities of the manager of a small branch of a bank and those of the manager of a large one. And it is not merely a difference in the quantity of the work for which he is responsible, although the large branch may have some thousands of accounts while the small one has only a hundred or so. The difference goes deeper than this, for the manager of a small branch is faced by restrictions and hemmed in by regulations to which his colleague of the large one is a stranger. He is in constant touch with his head office, and is not allowed to arrange loans, discount bills, or have his accounts overdrawn without reference to that authority. The bank's inspectors

descend upon him at frequent intervals and go through his books with minute care to see that everything is in order. If he has been through the ordinary routine of a bank clerk and has a sufficient knowledge of banking and company law, he has no difficulty in seeing that the work of his branch is carried out in strict conformity with the rules laid down. There his responsibility begins and ends, and it is therefore of a purely mechanical order, for he is not required to exercise his judgment except in matters of trivial importance. There seems no reason why an educated and clever woman, such as the potential bank manager should be, should not occupy such a position, provided that she has also sympathy and knowledge of the world, qualities which she is as likely to possess as the average man.

Among the latest additions to the staff of one London bank is a lady who, a few years ago, occupied a distinguished position at the New Zealand Bar. Not unnaturally she believes that there is no position of trust which a woman cannot fit herself to fill, just as she believes that in the near future all professions

will open their doors to women, and looks forward to the day when the woman barrister, practising at the English Bar, no less than the woman bank manager, will be an accomplished fact. Notwithstanding her legal training and the intimate knowledge of many matters having a direct bearing on the more advanced work which it has brought with it, this modern Portia wisely decided to start by making a practical acquaintance with the elements of banking. And so each section of the work receives her attention in turn—the greater part of it being mastered with an ease quite unknown to the average junior. There is no reasonable doubt that for this lady the future holds a position where her trained mind and exceptional abilities will have full play.

The bank manager *par excellence* has not at present his counterpart in the feminine world. It is doubtful if he ever will, in this generation at least. The wisdom of Solomon, the diplomacy of a Machiavelli, and the intuition of a fortune-teller are all combined in his person. If he also possesses the patience of Job—or, failing this, if he is able to simulate

a passable imitation of that valuable quality—he still finds scope for the practice of the humbler virtues. He must be, and is, a man of affairs in the truest sense of the word. In addition to the abstract qualities mentioned he must have a solid groundwork of knowledge in the shape of an intimate acquaintance with the class of business with which the clients of the bank in question deal. This can only be the fruit of many years' practical experience of their needs, and constitutes not his least important qualification for the responsible position which he holds. Unfortunately this special knowledge cannot be acquired by hard reading, otherwise the woman bank manager's way would lie clear before her, for from a purely academic standpoint it cannot be denied that a woman's brain is capable of at least as good work as that of a man when her nervous force is not being spent in other directions. But even women who have been Senior Wranglers in all but name if called upon to act as managers of important branches might find themselves sadly at a loss. On this subject Walter Bagehot says: "A very great many of the

strongest heads in England spend their minds on little else than on thinking whether other people will pay their debts. . . . Each banker in his own neighbourhood is . . . a kind of 'solvency-meter,' and lives by estimating rightly the 'responsibility of parties,' as he would call it." Again, he says: "There is the whole of the loan fund of the country lying in the hands of bankers and bill-brokers, which moves in an instant toward a trade that is unusually profitable if only that trade can produce securities which come within banking rules. . . . You could almost see the change of capital if you could look into the bill cases at different times. But what you could not see is the mental skill and knowledge which have made that transfer, and without which it could not have been made safely."

It is to his bank manager that the head of a business house will go when he needs advice on financial matters. The following illustration will show the value of the assistance which he receives. Just after the outbreak of war, in August 1914, a large wholesale firm found themselves with many thousand pounds' worth

of made-up goods on their hands. These, in accordance with the custom of the trade, had been manufactured and ordered in the early months of the summer and were to be invoiced to the retailers in the following October. Had events taken their normal course the bulk of the large stock which the firm held at the beginning of the season would have been exhausted by the demands of the retailers, but, as every one knows, there was a sudden cessation of orders in trade circles in the first days of the war. Telegrams and letters cancelling the orders previously given arrived in quick succession, and finally the firm found itself faced by ruin. In this emergency the head of the firm sought his bank manager. As old clients of the bank they were entitled to special consideration, and in the circumstances the manager, without any difficulty, arranged for facilities which enabled him to make to the partners an immediate advance sufficient to allow the firm not only to meet the demands upon their finances which the defection of the retailers had caused, but also to provide them with the means of striking out in a fresh direction

until the future had shaped itself more clearly. As had been foreseen, trade revived and the firm rose on the wave of prosperity—a more or less fictitious prosperity, so some of the financial wiseacres say—which swept over the country. Their balance-sheet, published a month ago, shows the debt to the bank completely extinguished, a stock which does not cause anxiety, and their general finances in a most flourishing condition.

The war has been a most fruitful cause of unexpected and difficult situations, and it has added no little to the burden of responsibility which the bank manager has to bear. But his responsibility to his clients does not consist merely in piloting them safely through their financial embarrassments. Of many he is the intimate friend, and in a vast number of cases he is, equally with the family lawyer, the recipient of their confidences.

Could services such as these be rendered by a woman? It would not be fair to assert that they could not, but it is to be feared that the necessary qualifications will only be acquired by her in a somewhat distant future.

Banking

The past two years have witnessed many changes of a wholly unexpected nature. As far as women are concerned not all the changes have been for the better, but since they were inevitable, and brought about by sharp necessity which knows no law, the public did well to accept them in a philosophical spirit. Necessity, not choice, made Woman take the place she holds to-day in the ranks of the industrial army. Presently she will be weighed in the balance, and it may confidently be affirmed that she will not be found wanting.

CHAPTER V

"Fares, Please!"

THE woman bus-conductor is a war-time impression. She is a sign of the days which have brought about those social changes which have resulted in women engaging in every kind of employment, from conducting buses to conducting businesses, and which have enabled them generally to occupy with success many places formerly filled exclusively by men. To-day the woman who collects your fare is not even a pioneer of her work. She is no ardent being alight with an enthusiastic glow for bus-conducting, who for some obscure reason tries to enrol her sisters in the ranks of the London General Omnibus Company. You do not merely see an occasional woman on a bus, strange-looking and out of place, a cynosure for the curious-eyed, but the woman bus-conductor is a familiar everyday sight in the streets of London. She calls forth no more comment

than when she was in the neat attire of housemaid or cook. On every other bus you see her standing jauntily on the step with a cheery smile and an independent don't-care-if-it-snows kind of look. She generally stands jauntily, she nearly always smiles, and her air of independence is superb. She is renowned throughout the Metropolis for her kind and courteous manner and for the neatness of her smart navy blue serge uniform, with its tight-fitting jacket, short skirt, leather leggings, and a 'Paddy' hat strapped loosely beneath her chin. She understands exactly how to measure out her sympathy to nervous old women, crochety old men, and jolly Tommies home on leave. She knows, in fact, how to handle all the odds and ends of humanity who swarm up and down the steps of her bus all day long. She has acquired a sense of direction and a faculty for governing the impulses of crowds which you would hardly expect to find among the capacities of the average servant girl. This development of her bump of organization is extraordinary. The directors and instructors of the London General Omnibus

Training School[1] have effected their work with remarkable swiftness. They have moulded raw material until that raw material has become a valuable link in the great chain of the vastly extending working world. The girl bus-conductor is a skilled workman because she has been taught the principles of honest service as well as the A B C of bus-conducting. She is an entirely new being who makes an additional factor in the utility of the world. When and how did it all happen? From whence did she emerge?

She first made her public appearance in March 1916, when the London General Omnibus Company asked for women to take the places of the men who had been called upon to join their groups. Since that time over 2000 women have passed fully qualified from the

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE.—The experiences met with by women bus-conductors employed by the London General Omnibus Company have formed the basis of this article. Since trading companies are not mentioned elsewhere in this book, it appears desirable to add that there are other omnibus companies who look after the interests of their women workers equally with the company mentioned. A visit to the Labour Exchange will enable any applicant to obtain their names. It should also be remembered that there are now a great number of women tram-conductors.

training school in Milman's Street, Chelsea. They have come from all sorts and conditions of homes. You are not to know it, of course, but sometimes the girl who is punching your ticket is a clergyman's daughter who hitherto has been her father's right hand in the parish. A stockbroker's wife is helping you to alight so neatly on the pavement (her husband is a soldier and she wishes to supplement her Army pay, for she has two small children to keep), or an officer's sister is clamouring for your fare. She may have been a school teacher, bored by her ceaseless and thankless task of drumming addition sums into the heads of children who cannot learn them. Perhaps she was a typist grinding in some dingy City office, tired by the brain-clogging routine and nauseated by an uncongenial atmosphere and an outlook of black chimney-pots. Once she may have been a small dressmaker's small assistant, who picked up other people's pins, and broke the bonds of her apprenticeship with delight and relief. In the upheaval of war women from all classes have found themselves travelling as employees over the

many routes of the London General Omnibus Company.

But the majority of women bus-conductors have undoubtedly been drawn from the ranks of better-class domestic servants, whose numbers in consequence have become so few that registry office proprietors search desperately for their successors, knowing all the while that their quest is in vain. Bridget, busy in her kitchen making the family's pies and puddings, is lured away by the siren of the motor-bus hooting up the High Street. She leaves her mistress to undertake her own cooking and dust her own rooms while she rides off on the bus of adventure.[1]

Can she be blamed because she listens to the hooter's raucous call, recognizes the golden opportunity of freedom from domestic work,

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE.—Will they ever return? In this connexion, though the sentiment expressed was not a nice one, the following conversation overheard one snowy day may be recalled. Scene, a maid-servant sweeping the snow away from the doorway of a large house. Two buses pass. First woman conductor: "Now then, Mary, that's right. Clear away the snow so that master shan't wet his feet." Second woman conductor: "Poor slaves! And the money they get!" Collapse of Mary.

Woman Tram-conductor at Brighton 112

Alfieri

and decides to take advantage of it? Who shall reproach her because her restlessness has assured her a life of varying interest—she whose one daily excitement hitherto has been a surreptitious chat with the butcher's boy or the milkman's young man? But it is to her credit that she has not merely been inspired by the glamour of adventure or the promise of wages so remunerative that they exceed by far any that she could possibly have expected in the past. She is bent on doing her bit, inasmuch as her soldier lad in France is doing his share toward winning the war. She really is touched with red, white, and blue paint; she is anxious to help 'carry on' as usual at home.

So she transfers her services from the mistress to the master of the household, and it is as well that she does so, for unless she turned her energies in this direction there would necessarily be fewer buses, transit would become still more difficult, and the difficulties of the business man, the workers, the buyers and travellers, already so great, would become almost overwhelming.

Perhaps she scarcely knows her own value when she gives her much-tried mistress 'notice' for the last time, packs her boxes, and departs to the training school, where she is to learn the mysteries of her new craft, in search of employment. In some cases, indeed, employment does not result, for she is by no means always considered a suitable applicant for the position of bus-conductor. Up to the end of 1916 the London General Omnibus Company alone had received many thousand applications for situations, while, of course, far fewer posts have been available.

But if she has the good fortune to possess the qualifications necessary to satisfy the directors she is sent to a doctor, by whom she is required to submit to a somewhat severe medical examination. The best of health is necessary to pass this test, for life on the bus, so beneficial to those sufficiently strong to stand the continual strain and unrest, is equally harmful to others not so robust.

The applicant should be twenty-one years or over and under thirty-five years of age. She should be at least five feet in height.

Defective eyesight must at once be remedied by glasses.

When she has passed the medical examination the applicant's next step is to go to Scotland Yard and obtain for herself a licence. This costs her 5s. Before she receives it she must be ready and able to give all particulars of herself to the police. She must produce references from her former situations, and strict inquiries will be made about her character. Any charge officially recorded against her name will be practically fatal to her chances of success.

After she has thus assured Scotland Yard and the world in general that she is absolutely the right kind of person to fill the post she seeks, she starts her short course of instruction at the training school. If she is a sensible, active girl she enjoys every minute of the following fortnight.

There are at present fourteen instructors at the training school, kind and sympathetic women for the most part, who have gained their experience from actual service on the roads and who therefore know exactly with

what difficulties the future bus girl will have to contend.

The aspiring bus-conductor now receives tuition in all branches and parts of her future work. She is taught the detailed history of tickets and the geography of routes. She learns the points of the route upon which she will presently work until she knows their whereabouts by heart. Her ability to stop her bus at the proper places on a dark or foggy night vies with that of the Early Victorian housewife whose great boast was that "she could lay her hands on the blue bag in the dark." She is shown how to punch a ticket in the correct way—and there is more skill in punching a ticket properly than the casual observer would ever be led to believe. She is taken into a map room, where it is conveyed to her that, quite contrary to any ideas she previously held on the subject, the Crystal Palace and Hampton Court do not by any means lie in the same direction. Common sense aids her in her lessons on the handling of coins on a dark night, and she soon becomes expert in detecting the difference between a farthing

and a sixpenny bit, a two-shilling piece and a penny, a French franc and a British shilling, merely by rubbing the coins in the palm of her hand. Films are shown for her benefit depicting the way in which accidents do happen to the worst regulated of buses, and how they might often be avoided. Other pictures describe in detail the faults of the bad bus-conductor and the qualifications essential to the good one, from which the pupil is left to draw her own conclusions. Practical instruction is given by a series of 'joy rides,' as the girl herself terms them. She goes with some of her colleagues for a ride along some forsaken route, and then she has to submit to the ordeal of standing all the joltings, shakings, and swervings which the average motor-bus is capable of performing.

During these rides she is shown the correct way to jump on and off a motor-bus—an art which only the most careful student of it can claim to bring to perfection, as the occasional user of motor-buses often discovers to his cost. At the end of this stage the pupil is taken on a bus where there are some 'real'

passengers, and under the vigilant supervision of the instructor she collects fares for the first time. This maiden trip is a terrible ordeal, for the beginner, unless she is self-possessed, shows her inexperience only too plainly. But the public, always indulgent to the pupil, is quite ready to overlook, or if it does look, looks with much kindly interest and sympathy.

One of the principal and most important of the lessons impressed upon the future bus-conductor is the necessity for being universally polite and for keeping her temper when it would be easy to lose it. This gives a finish to her training which the ideal conductor certainly needs. For the public are on occasion very trying, so much so that one girl conductor, when asked what she found most trying in her work, replied in two words, "The public." It is indeed in this matter of courtesy and training that the woman has a decided pull over the man whose place she is filling. In former days the man conductor came usually from the old horse bus, and brought with him all the ways and weaknesses of the proverbial *Punch* busman. He was given no instruc-

tion and he desired none. Indeed he would have resented it extremely if he had been obliged to go through his paces at a training school. On the other hand, the woman, from the very first minute of her engagement, has been taught to render service in the best possible manner. From her is reflected the light cast by the forethought and direction of a wise, well-controlled staff. The consequence is that, while the public is generally apt to comment upon the agreeability of a really 'nice' male bus-conductor and regard him as a *rara avis*, it looks upon a disobliging girl with surprise and as a type much more rarely encountered. Nevertheless the busmen do not grudge their sister workers the achievement of their popularity. Quite the contrary, the man always meets the girl with a 'hail-fellow-well-met' kind of air, and gives her every assistance within his power. In the early days of the women's appearance in the garage, when there were numerous difficulties to puzzle them at the end of their day, more than once the men volunteered to stay late and help put matters straight—a fact worth recording.

During the period of training the girl is allowed two shillings a day to cover her out-of-pocket expenses, this being a war-time innovation on the part of the Company. There is a large canteen on the premises of the training school, at which food is provided at a very low rate. Everything possible is done to brighten the outlook of the future conductor. No college graduate could be more sorry to leave *Alma Mater* than the one-time Bridget of the kitchen to say good-bye to her new training school. And so that she may take with her pleasant memories her directors give her a joyous 'send-off' before she actually becomes one of their workers. Every Thursday night a concert is given in the lecture hall to the passing-out girls, who are dispatched in batches of fifty or a hundred. The hall is festive with flags and gay decorations, and the air is alive with goodwill and good-humour. The aspiring bus-conductor sits in the front of the hall, and the seasoned worker, who has already had experience on the road, calls in to criticize and talk 'shop.' The directors take their places on the platform, and one of them addresses

the girls on the work that lies before them and their future responsibilities to the public. Presently the passing-out members stand at attention and answer the roll call. Some one plays a march and immediately the hall is full of inchoate bus-conductors pacing round for inspection, straight and taut in their brand-new uniforms, with shoulders back and chests forward in real military manner.

There is a convincing note in this genial gathering of employers and employees. It plays an important part in the girl conductor's life, for it helps her to realize herself as a unit of importance in the great body which strives for efficient and quick service. If there is a touch of discipline in the atmosphere it is discipline which lends itself to the approval of freedom, of independence and individuality in each girl who conducts her own bus.

A day or two later the girl who has passed out is enrolled upon the Company's books as a fully fledged worker. She is appointed to some especial route on some especial bus and is registered under an especial number. Henceforth she is expected to work on an average

about ten hours a day, with a further extension of two or three hours nightly during relief week. She does not like the extra duties entailed by relief week, but it is an unavoidable, unselfish task; she fills the places of other women who are freed from work much earlier in the day.

The first few days on the bus are the girl's great test of suitability for the work. The sudden plunge into the strenuous, restless life is often a great tax upon her strength. The Company, conscious of this, only desires her to work for about four days during her first week of service. And still, no matter how easily she settles into her work, she commences by going home nightly with weary limbs and an aching head. It is almost a case of kill or—endure. For if she can come safely through the first few weeks and feel none the worse in herself, she may rest assured that she has physical qualities necessary to the successful conductor. But if the work is really beyond her strength she falls out of the ranks and makes her bow of adieu to the garage.

From the time of her evolution as a fully

qualified conductor she receives a salary, the minimum of which is six shillings a day. Her wages depend greatly upon the length of her particular route and the number of journeys she is able to make daily. On Sundays, when the journeys necessarily take longer time, her payment is increased. Sometimes by dint of very hard work she is able to bring up her salary to £2 14s. weekly,[1] but she cannot continue to do this for long without intermittent rest. Indeed this girl of the road finds an occasional rest more of a necessity than a luxury, and happily headquarters are obligingly reasonable in the matter.

But nevertheless she cannot hope for real success with her work unless she is prepared to devote not only all her time but her interest to it. For she has no definite or stated hour for commencing her day's work, and consequently personal appointments must be shadows in the background of her existence. She is merely an element in the whole of a wonderful organization into which she fits

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE.—The average weekly earnings work out at about 36s.

herself whenever the mechanism is ready for her especial attention. Sometimes it so happens that when she sets off on her bus in the very early hours of the morning the suburbs are still with sleep, and at other times matters arrange themselves so that her day's journey is ended when the suburbs are once more, as Mrs Gamp would say, "wropped in slumber." She usually finds it a good plan to live near the garage, so that when her work is ended, or begun, in the small hours of the morning things are easier for her. If you wander along any of the smaller streets near an omnibus terminus or garage you will find the girl bus-conductor a very familiar sight.

Dinner-time fits in when it is most convenient for it to do so; at the end of a journey, or at one of the 'points,' when the girl is released for about an hour and a half by a colleague. Imagine the vexation and disappointment that ensues when the relief girl has failed to turn up and the poor hungry conductor has to start out on another journey without the meal she requires so badly. All girl bus-conductors affirm that life on the road gives them enormous

appetites, and it is as well for them that whenever it has been possible to do so the directors of the London General Omnibus Company have arranged with the proprietors of restaurants or small inns close to the halting-places to supply the girls with properly cooked meals at cost prices. At these resting-places the girls can have a brush and tidy-up, so necessary after a journey on a cold, windy day.

The daily routine is often broken by visits from supervisors—understanding women whose sole business it is to stop and chat with the girls on the routes, listen to their little anecdotes, and see that all is well with them. They undertake to bring before headquarters any complaint or grievance the girl may make, and they have the aptitude to put in the right word of encouragement at the right moment.

If the bus-conductor ever becomes a supervisor she has reached the zenith of her career, but it is a post for which, although many may be called, few, obviously, can be chosen, for she must be a woman born, not made, for the work.

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Thus much for the physical side of the work. Before a girl takes it up she would do well to think for a while about the continual running up and down the steps. She should have the capacity to remain indifferent to all the extremes of cold and heat of which our climate is capable. Snow and rain, sun and heat must alike fall across her bus and leave her unmoved. The passengers riding within may grumble, but bad weather must be part of her own life with which there can be no quarrelling.

There is also a very human and intensely interesting side to her work which makes her outlook a kaleidoscope of different scenes and faces. If the general public has adopted the bus girl, the bus girl has certainly adopted the general public.

"Humour and tact are the two ingredients that go to the making of the ideal conductor," said one of their number to me as our bus, fog-hindered, crawled somewhere along the neighbourhood of Tottenham Court Road. "Without them existence is—well, just existence. The girl who possesses them finds that each journey is what the voyage must

be to the sailor. She might touch on treasure trove all unawares.

"When I go to bed at night I just have to lie awake and laugh as I think of all the incidents that have happened during the day. Last night I thought of the dear old lady who openly pitied me because she said my hands were blue with cold. Presently she brought out a long pair of white suède gloves, only fit for evening wear, and begged me to put them on and keep them as a memento of a relative who died from exposure to the cold. Her eyes were filled with tears, and I had to accede with grateful thanks—although I knew that the bus would rock with the passengers' amusement when she had gone. Old ladies often give bus girls presents, but they do not take the form of gloves. They are usually tracts successfully hidden from sight in dainty white envelopes.

"Then yesterday there was that funny Canadian soldier who had never been to London before. He got on the bus at Trafalgar Square and asked for a ticket to Charing Cross. I told him we were there already; he had only

to cross the road. But he shook his head and held out his penny. 'No, young woman,' he said, 'that won't do. I can see no Cross. My friends told me to get on the bus here and ride along till I saw Charing Cross, and I mean to do so.' And we were well down Victoria Street before some of the inside passengers proved more convincing than I was."

She darted upstairs and returned in a few minutes with a smiling face.

"We always have to be on the look-out for the seedy sort of individual who has just gone on top. He's the kind of man who takes the front seat on a winter's night and does his best to evade us. He keeps us waiting for at least five minutes while he fumbles in his pockets for a penny, cracks bad jokes about the weather, and tells us that before we women worked on the buses he never paid his fares. Then there is also the smartly dressed lady inside the bus who makes herself as invisible as possible when fares are being collected. It is a curious thing, but over and over again I have noticed that this particular kind of person who doesn't believe in paying her fares

is pointed out to my notice by a Belgian or Frenchwoman. 'Mees,' they say, 'that leede at ze other end of ze bus—ask her for ze fare. She has no ticket.' Sure enough on inspection it turns out that she has no ticket and does not look as if she had had any intention of paying her fare.

"But worst of all are the people who try to give us bad money. Do you think they know that we have to make good out of our own pockets at the end of the day?

"Have you ever heard of the change-and-parcel fiend, who rummages round her smart handbag and eventually produces a pound note for a penny fare? Quite permissible, of course, but think of the time it takes us to count out the change. She comes in laden with parcels and seems under the impression that she's hired a taxi-cab and that the bus-conductor is her footman. But it's all in a day's work, and other things compensate.

"Generally speaking, business passengers show the most consideration. They will give me their fares as they go up the steps to save me an extra journey. There's one old gentle-

man who invariably leaves chocolates in the corner seat for me on the way home to cheer me during the rest of the ride.

"But you do not always laugh with your passengers on the bus—sometimes you cry with them. You catch heartrending side-glimpses of war tragedies. Soldiers going back to the front riding to the station with their sweethearts, or women who have just received the worst news—they make one remember the war, and the joys of bus-conducting fade into insignificance.

"Talking about the war leads some of us to wonder what we will do after the war. The Company has promised all the men who are fighting that their places shall be kept open, and we would not have it otherwise. It may happen, of course, that many of us will still be wanted—motor-buses may be used even more extensively than now. But it's going to be a big problem.

"You see, not one of us will be able to go back to indoor work of any description. The free-and-easy outdoor life renders it impossible. We have all got a contagious restless feeling.

"Fares, Please!"

We have grown to love the feeling of being able to look above us and see the sky, of knowing that the fresh air is always blowing round us. We have grown to watch the sun travel round and note the effect of its shadows on the buildings every time we pass them during the day; we have learnt to know exactly where to find all the stars. To-night there's going to be a fog, which will make us late. I'm sorry, for I wanted to finish up early. I've got seats for the theatre. Finsbury Park! Didn't you say you wanted Finsbury Park?"

CHAPTER VI

Delivering the Goods

WHEN war broke out my thoughts turned naturally, like those of many thousands of my sex, to the things I wanted to do and couldn't do, and to the things I could do and didn't want to do! For several months I did nothing but put my name down at several employment bureaux, who politely replied that my name was before them and would be taken in rotation. In most cases my name continued to confront them, and the question of employment advanced no further toward solution. Still imbued with the spirit of patriotism and still determined to do *something*, I waited patiently, always hoping the 'something' would mean a job in connexion with horses which would keep me out of doors and at the same time one which would release a man.

Standing one morning outside a butcher's shop talking to a friend I casually remarked

that I would like to drive a milk cart, butcher's cart, or anything to do with a horse. After listening to her expostulations on the subject as to the hardships to be endured and the difficulties to be encountered, I entered the butcher's shop a few minutes later to give an order. While I was thus engaged with the salesman the owner himself came forward and asked me if I meant what I had said outside his shop a short time before. I replied, "Yes." "Well," he said, "will you drive for us on Saturday next?" Without having time to do the usual thing, 'think it over,' I then and there decided to accept his offer—and that is how I came to drive a butcher's cart on its daily round.

To drive and ride for pleasure differs greatly from doing it as an occupation for which wages are received and in which rules have to be observed. The former I had always done, the latter never! and to drive a high butcher's cart, exposed to all and every sort of weather, for three or four hours each morning, is not by any means romantic or ideal. But in spite of that it is most interesting and

healthy, and it certainly possesses an amusing side.

On my part it required a certain amount of pluck to present myself at that butcher's shop at 8.30 on that memorable Saturday morning, and to mount that high cart with a man beside me, feeling and knowing that dozens of pairs of eyes were looking at me from behind curtains and but partly shuttered windows; but when once mounted, seated, and started my courage returned, and after an hour or two on the round I felt as though I had been thus employed for years.

The man whose place I was going to fill accompanied me for about three weeks. During that time I had to note down names and addresses of customers in an order book, which I invariably lost at the start and which was always returned in due course to the shop, and awaited me on arrival back. During this period of 'instruction' the weather was the very worst of the whole year, and for many days I was driving in blinding snow and gales of wind which even the horse found it difficult to face. Proving strong enough to

stand the exposure myself, I was soon 'promoted' to delivering as well as driving, and when my tutor was called up I took over his 'round' completely, and although I disliked handling meat of any kind I resolved to suppress that feeling, knowing that this was necessary if I was ever to become a successful 'butcheress.'

The people who had hitherto just seen me driving the cart were evidently not prepared for this further shock, and gazed at me with dumb amazement when I appeared at their doors with the *meat* and the question, "Any orders for the butcher, please?"

One or two incidents of my first reception are still very fresh in my memory. Calling at one house with some soup-bones, the astonished damsel who opened the door to me fled in dismay to her mistress, saying, "If you please'm there's a lady at the door with bones: what shall I do with them?" On being told to take them from me she returned and did so, gazing at me meanwhile as I if were a spirit from an unknown world!

For my work I wear a waterproof uniform,

consisting of a short coat, breeches, and leggings. This costume I find most suitable for climbing up and down the cart, especially in wet weather. Appearing thus apparelled at one old lady's door I encountered a very shocked yet interested stare, so I said: "I hope you are not shocked at this sensible uniform?" She replied, "My dear, to the pure all things are pure," and now I am sure she often wishes she wore the same costume herself.

One grumpy old man, who was always very difficult with my predecessor, declared at first that he "wouldn't have no women messing about his doors for orders," and it was with great difficulty that I could get him to give me an order at all. He preferred to write it most illegibly on a piece of paper and stick it on a remote bush in his garden, every time choosing a different bush, and when I failed once to find his paper and asked him for it, he indignantly replied: "Can't 'ee see the order up tree?" which proved to be a big elm tree, and the order *was* a considerable distance 'up tree'! By bringing him an especially good joint weekly I have made him one of my

most loyal friends and supporters, and now he gives me his orders verbally and I no longer have to hunt 'up tree' for his scraps of paper.

To begin with, some women were just as pessimistic in their views as to the capability of a female to deliver their goods correctly, but that was soon overcome and they quickly began to put confidence in me. They even began to trust me to take payment for their meat.

With some of the poorer people it is customary for them to pay their bills weekly or daily, as the case may be. My experiences in collecting these small payments were often most amusing. On one occasion, when the customer was out and unable to take the meat and pay me in person, this note greeted me: "Plase put meat en plate en mangle the money is their becos of the flies." The reader may perhaps interpret the meaning of this missive better than I did, for I could find no plate, no mangle, and no money!

Debt-morning to me is the busiest one in the week and the most difficult. It is then my

duty to call and try to persuade the debtor to pay a small sum weekly in reduction of his debt. The task is an arduous one, to say the least, and it requires the patience of Job to listen to the hundred and one excuses and tales of woe (in nine cases out of ten not true) offered as reasons for not paying at all. After listening, perhaps for twenty minutes on end, to various 'inexactitudes' I may receive *threepence* to reduce a bill of four pounds. I fear that there will be many calls before *that* debt has been wiped off.

One morning while engaged on my collecting duties I earned (I hope!) the lasting respect of a rival butcher. Coming away from a house I met my 'rival' going to it for an order. Seeing me he said: "Good morning, miss. You did me a good turn yesterday morning, and if you were a man I should stand you a drink." "What's happened?" said I. "Oh," he replied, "that 'party' you're just coming from owes *you* a bit, does she?" On my asking how he knew that, he replied: "Because I pulled your *bill* out of her letter-box yesterday. She was out and I thought

that piece of paper was an order for me. Now she is just beginning to run up an account with me, and she has got five pounds a week coming in, and I shall very soon stop her little game." Naturally I was rather disgusted at being 'taken in' by the garrulous tongue of the debtor, although at the same time somewhat elated at doing the rival butcher a 'good turn' and earning his respect in consequence.

In connexion with the payment at the door of bills and books, a rather unhappy experience once befell me with regard to a cheque that was given to me in payment of a customer's account. It was blowing a gale at the time, and so fierce was the wind that it was impossible to keep the rug around me on the cart, or my coat from blowing open, and the wind somehow got under my coat and blew my books out of the pockets. Among these books was the one containing the cheque between its leaves. I hastily pulled up, jumped down, and gathered my books together, but alas! found that the cheque was gone. Imagine my horror at the discovery when it meant retracing my steps

and explaining the catastrophe to the customer —and it was in the early days when I was a 'new broom,' when I wanted to create a good impression and sweep quite, quite clean. I explained my mission and was given another cheque, and told not to bother as the payment of the first one would be stopped at the bank. At the same time I was asked to keep the secret of the lost cheque between the customer and myself. This time I took good care to put the cheque into a safer place, and proceeded to drive back to the shop. Just as I reached the spot where all my books had vanished out of my pocket I saw a man standing and beckoning to me with the lost cheque in his hand. How I had hoped nobody would see or find that wretched cheque, and here, like the proverbial bad shilling, it had turned up. Apparently the finder had seen me hunting about in the ditch for something, and when I had driven off he came and looked too, and discovered the cheque caught on to a tree just above the ditch in which I had been searching. This, though it may appear a trivial incident, appeared to me in those early days of taking payment a

most unpleasant experience. I am thankful that the like has not occurred since.

With regard to debts and debt-collecting I sometimes think a man does better than a woman, for the latter is expected to have a softer heart than a man and a better understanding of the difficulty in spending a weekly wage to the best advantage without incurring debts. Experience in this matter is improving my discriminating powers as to whether the excuses and tales of woe given are genuine or not. In time I may hope perhaps to reach that high altitude where county court judges sit with ears impervious to even the most harrowing story.

I begin my work at 8.30 a.m. each day. My horse and cart are ready waiting on my arrival outside the shop, and my first duty is to pack my cart with the meat ordered for the day, which has been got ready the night before by the men. With this business of cutting and preparing I have nothing to do. To me falls the outside work only in connexion with a round, such as packing, delivering, taking orders for the next day, and collecting the money of

those who wish to pay. My employer shows me the greatest consideration and kindness in all my work, and often packs the heaviest pieces of meat himself, and on Saturdays, when the orders are heaviest, one of the men accompanies me to help deliver, and I then go with him on his round later. My own round has from eighty to a hundred calls, and occupies from three to four hours daily.

Punctuality is the secret of success in a butcher's work. To be late with the daily dinner results in vials of wrath being emptied on your head. A slow horse is no good in this work, and everybody on the road makes room for the butcher's cart with the utmost goodwill, and forgives the driver for his Jehu-like driving.

No matter what excuses you may have the customer will listen to none of them if his dinner is ten minutes late. Such minor catastrophes as the harness suddenly breaking and stranding you in the middle of a hill, unable to move backward or forward for a considerable time (and this has happened more than once), counts as nothing to an impatient cook. Nor

will she greet you with a smile though you have tried to show your knowledge of the best American maxims as to willing service by leaving your horse and cart by the wayside and finishing the round on foot.

Among my customers are a great many Belgians who understand little or no English, and the difficulties met with at first in endeavouring to interpret their various wants were numerous, except in cases where they spoke a French which I could understand, and it was only by their pointing to the different parts of their bodies that I was able to form any sort of idea as to the part of the animal they required. In many instances I eventually turned up with the wrong joint, for I must confess that, to start with, my own knowledge of the different parts of an animal was somewhat vague, and when I found myself with a cart full of these different unknown parts, and quite alone to deliver them, my spirits fell below zero. I often felt that it was impossible to deliver the right part to the right person, but with a considerable amount of study as to the weight and kind of meat (which informa-

tion can be gleaned from the ticket accompanying each piece of meat) I overcame the difficulty, and now no longer have to calculate beforehand *how* many sausages make a pound. Now that the Belgians and I understand each other better it is always the same command: "You know, missus, *no* bone and *no* fat." Often it happens that the Belgian butcher and I arrive together at the same house, and both wait anxiously to see which of us is getting the order. In the end perhaps both of us do!

In very windy weather I wear, for the sake of its warmth, a knitted helmet which completely covers my hair. This helmet, together with my uniform, makes it somewhat difficult to distinguish from the back whether I am a man or a woman. One morning when deep snow was on the ground and travelling was difficult I was obliged to get down from my cart and dig out the balls of snow which had caked under my horse's hoofs. Leaning down, with the horse's hoof on my knee, I suddenly heard a voice from the back of me saying: "Can I be of any assistance to you, *sir*?" Imagine his astonishment at seeing I was a

The Butcher-boy Girl
Farringdon Photo Co

female, and mine at seeing he was an Anzac—and a wounded one at that!

At odd times it is my duty to fetch live poultry from various farms and take them back to the shop to be killed. Arriving at the farmer's I have sometimes been asked to 'lend a hand' in catching the elusive creature and getting it safely to the cart, a matter of some difficulty at times. Once I was bringing back for the Christmas market ten very fat geese which I had helped to catch. They had been safely stowed away inside my cart, and while I was driving gaily homeward down a very steep hill the fastenings of the back of the cart jolted loose and I suddenly heard a great commotion at the back, and to my horror I saw that two of my fat passengers had dropped into the road and were preparing to waddle off home. Fortunately they were too fat to go far or fast, and were soon recaptured and restowed away, while a piece of string secured the fastenings again. But the adventure had disturbed the cargo and an amount of 'talking' equal to a local parliament was going on inside, much to the

amusement of passers-by and the discomfort of my spirited horse, who is always strangely upset by any new noise. Nevertheless we all safely landed at the shop without any further adventures.

Another of my experiences was intimately connected with this same horse, which is not only a spirited but an extremely nervous animal. One morning I left him outside a house while I went in to get an order, having fastened him as usual with his check rein, which allows him some liberty but not much. When I came out of the house I suddenly heard a great breaking of glass, and hurrying to the gate I saw that my horse and cart were embracing a lamp-post, which between them they were smashing and which was shedding glass freely all over my cart and the road. The noise attracted many of the residents, who came to my rescue, and finally we freed the cart and horse. The total 'bag' for the day was then discovered to be a broken step and a frightened animal on my part, and a broken lamp-post on the other. In some unknown way the check rein had become unfastened, and

the horse, finding himself free, hastened to get a feed before my return, with the result described. I considered myself fortunate in having only the step taken off instead of having a wheel removed and my cart overturned at the same time.

On another occasion I came out from a house to find the horse had vanished altogether and no sign of him remained. Fortunately I had just finished delivering all the contents of the cart and was prepared to walk back to the shop and see what had become of my horse. I had just gone a little way when I saw him being led back to me by a man, who informed me that he met him walking quite calmly toward his stable. My horse bore himself with dignity, and apparently had no intention of running away, but for these breaches of rules he knows quite well he now goes without his daily apples.

Perhaps the reader may be wondering what pay I am getting for my varied duties. At the start I too wondered, as no agreement was entered upon by my employer and myself as to 'wages.' Well, for the first month I

received *nothing*, and I began to grow rather anxious as to what my labour was worth in shillings. In due course, however, I received a lump sum of thirty shillings, which was my pay for one month's driving, during which time I only drove and at the same time was instructed in the numerous names and addresses of a 'round.' When at last the 'instructor' joined up, and I became a taker of orders, deliverer of meat, and collector of debts, my pay rose to fourteen shillings a week, and for this princely wage I worked the same number of hours. Compared with other work that women are engaged in I consider this pay to be good. The afternoons are free, and I am at liberty to take on another job if I like, although most employers need your services in the mornings, if not all day. Perhaps the fact that my mornings are occupied explains my good wages. At present my employer is unable to find work enough for me all day, but as time passes and exempted men are called up from the business, the care of the horse may fall to me. This will mean earlier hours, and more work altogether. Yet it will be delightful

work, for nothing is more interesting to one than the care of the horse one drives daily and which is associated with all one's work in all weathers.

There are people who think a butcher's cart adaptable for other things than carrying meat and live stock. Once after a Zeppelin raid in the neighbourhood I was inundated with requests from pedestrians on my round to stop my work and drive them to see the damage which had been done by the bombs. When I explained that my first duty was to feed the public (although secretly at heart I was longing to drive off and see the damage myself), they went to the shop and besought my employer to allow me to drive them to the scene of interest. He, being a 'sport,' willingly consented. I then returned to the waiting sightseers and packed up with a very different load from the one I had started with earlier in the day, and in spite of pelting rain, mud, and every other discomfort imaginable, we saw everything possible to be seen—and returned home very little the better for it!

It sometimes happens that one of the men

falls ill and then I must be prepared to do *his* round as well as my own, which has necessitated learning all the rounds by degrees, but on such occasions I meet with the greatest kindness and consideration. If it is a wet morning windows are opened and orders shouted to me on the cart to save time, while if the customer knows that I am taking the place of one who is ill she will invariably fetch the joint herself in order to save the proxy unnecessary trouble. Many a hot cup of coffee is given to me on a bad morning, and when the weather is unusually wet expressions of sympathy are offered on every side. One very rainy day a good soul even offered to lend me a pair of dry boots and another mackintosh while she dried my others in readiness for me the next morning. What further kindness and appreciation of your efforts could you expect? All and every kind of outdoor work has its drawbacks in rough weather, but, on the other hand, there are the lovely spring mornings, when one wishes the round were only twice as long.

To study people's likes and dislikes in the

question of food soon becomes the most interesting thing in one's daily life when engaged in my particular sort of work, and I enjoy it immensely from the start to the finish, as I feel it is a work that *must* be carried on; and although there are perhaps other jobs better suited to women, nevertheless the experience I have gained, the adventures I have had, and the kindness and appreciation of my work I have met from the many people it has been my privilege to come in contact with during my year's constant work will be lastingly and happily remembered.

PART II

WORKS OF MERCY

CHAPTER VII

Nursing at the French Front

THOSE who have taken the trouble to study some of the social problems of modern France will have noticed the absence of the well-organized system of trained nursing of Great Britain, America, and the countries of Northern Europe.

Before the separation of the Roman Catholic Church from the French State nursing was almost entirely in the hands of the nuns, who, although their knowledge of the science of nursing did not always come up to twentieth-century requirements, were nevertheless beyond the criticism to which women workers are exposed, especially in Latin countries.

But the nuns left France before nurses had been trained to take their place. It had been hoped, however, that nursing as a profession would immediately be taken up and organized as successfully as teaching had been taken up and organized. Nursing schools were started

—Dr Anna Hamilton at Bordeaux founded her excellent school on the Nightingale system —but unfortunately, until the outbreak of war, very few women of good family, unless Protestants, would accept the idea of nursing without the protection of the nun's veil.

This, of course, is comprehensible. The nun, as nurse, has her place in the traditional history of France. No nation, least of all the French nation, can be expected to bury its most cherished traditions one day and give birth to fresh ones the day after. Nursing had always been the vocation set aside for the mystical Bride of Christ.

Without in any way taking up the defence of the Roman Catholic Church, one cannot help regretting the departure of the nun. In spite of the lack of skill shown by many of them, in spite of certain restrictions, such as the non-washing of patients, placed upon their nursing by the Superior of their orders, the nun's life had been dedicated to the service of humanity, sacrifice for her did not count, and her presence lent a moral safety to any surroundings and at any hour. To the medical staff, from doctor

and student and orderly, to the patient and soldier, the nun was 'sacred,' she was one who had renounced the world to be above the world, the pure, holy woman who watched and waited and eased the sufferer's pain, and whose prayers and sympathy helped so many on their long, last journey. How she was beloved!

As a profession nursing was one of the lowliest exercised by those whose social position would allow them to take tips for 'services rendered'; in fact, the tips and other perquisites were the only reason why they practised a profession as badly paid as nursing in the civil and military hospitals in France. The nun, or rather her community, had received a mere pittance from the Government in exchange for her hours of hard work and devotion. But leading the life she did the low salary did not affect the nun. It was a very serious matter, however, for her lay successor, and so, when the nuns had gone, with few exceptions nursing was left in the hands of women who had neither the refinement nor the education necessary to make nurses as we understand the term,

and between the status of the nursing nun and the professional nurse is a gulf which perhaps even the terrible upheaval of war cannot bridge. For, of all professions, nursing demands women of the highest refinement and morality; otherwise their medical knowledge becomes a danger to the community, and their professional surroundings coarsen a nature unprotected by the divine spark of willing self-sacrifice. That is why any attempt to lower the prestige of the glorious apostolate organized by Florence Nightingale is a sin against humanity the consequences of which must sooner or later be heavily felt.

Fortunately, then, for the soldiers of France there was the French Red Cross. The ladies of the French Red Cross, who have done most of the war nursing, are all voluntary nurses and work under one or other of the three societies which together form the French Red Cross —Le Secours aux Blessés Militaires, L'Union des Femmes de France, and Les Dames Françaises. These ladies have been splendid. Naturally very skilful with their fingers, and possessing the native intelligence of the French

woman, they have quickly picked up their work and done extremely well.

The ladies of Le Secours aux Blessés Militaires, in order to obtain their first diploma, work at Mlle Genain's school, Les Peupliers, near Paris. The school is excellently run, and the lady herself is a past-mistress in the art of discipline. To see her work is a pleasure, and one cannot help feeling sorry that Mlle Genain had not spent a few years in England, taken the best of our British nursing training back with her, and been placed at the head of the French professional nurses.

After obtaining the first diploma Red Cross candidates have to pass a graduated series of technical examinations, and a final examination of Infirmière Major; at the same time they get experience of nursing in the civil and military hospitals. But by no means all the nurses nursing at the Front have had these qualifications; in fact, at the outbreak of war there were nurses who had as diplomas their good intentions only, for the war is a much more gigantic concern than any one

could have imagined it would be, and the peace estimate of the number of hospitals required was quite ten times less than the number of hospitals at present in France.

French Red Cross ladies, let us repeat it, have been admirable, but it would not be fair to flatter them into the belief that they are 'trained' nurses. It has been argued that during their months at the Front they have gained experience that years of hospital training could not have given them. That is true. Nevertheless, the standard of training is there, hospital discipline has to be acquired, and it would be a base injustice to our own nurses to make them spend years preparing themselves for the profession of nursing if perfection could be attained without systematic training.

There are hospitals, however, where the nursing is left in the hands of orderlies, or, rather, men who are doing their military service as orderlies. To attempt to describe the work of these men is difficult, for a more motley crowd it would be hard to find. Most of them, however, have this one indispensable qualification—they are all unfit for military service.

Some of them are of noble birth, some of them are distinguished scholars, some are the heads of large business houses, some are ploughboys, and many are priests. Some are good, some indifferent, and, alas! some are bad. But then, to put it mildly, nursing is not a man's profession. A home without a mother, it is generally agreed, is a dismal failure: a hospital —who could describe it!

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It was after the battle of the Marne. The writer of this article had gone to France on receipt of a telegram from French friends asking her to "come and help." Added to a deep love for France, where she had received part of her education, this writer realized, perhaps better than the average Englishwoman, how terribly France must suffer during the war. She had lived with French friends, who had for years to exist under the nose of the arrogant Huns. She knew that France had to defend herself against an implacable enemy, that, ready or not, she had to hold a battle line of over five hundred miles until her allies

were organized and able to give her substantial assistance.

It is impossible to describe the sufferings of the soldiers in the early days. Their best hospitals were in the hands of the Germans; their chloroform, their gauze, had been taken by the Germans; the army was retreating, and the wounded lay piled up in cattle-trucks and untended for days. They were crowded into school-houses, station waiting-rooms, and churches—often on straw. And through all his sufferings the French soldier was magnificent; except for his cries of intense agony under the surgeon's knife, never did he murmur, never did he complain; he cared only for one thing, that the Germans must and should not get to Paris.

It was then that the writer of this article determined to stay and help the French, decided that, instead of offering her services as a very willing but amateur nurse, she would turn her knowledge of France and the French to account by bringing over a little army of fully trained British nurses to fill up the gaps in the French military hospitals. It was

not an easy task, but it was bound to succeed from its very necessity. The French Minister of War greeted the suggestion with enthusiasm, and before the writer left the Ministry, the document empowering her to bring over her countrywomen and place them in the French military hospitals was signed and sealed.

In England there was no need to look for help. Nurses arrived in scores offering their services to France. They came bringing certificates or promises of certificates. A curious crowd they were, all suffering from war fever, those who had no certificates confidently asserting how every one connected with them was willing to certify that they were 'born' nurses.

How is the ordinary person to know the professional value of a nurse? In our Colonies, State registration protects the public against bogus nurses, but in England we are at the mercy of any one who likes to call herself a nurse, and it is very unfair to the qualified nurse.

Fortunately, however, for the good of the

work in France, Mrs Bedford Fenwick, President of the International Council of Nurses, and the first nursing authority in the world, willingly gave the benefit of her experience and technical advice to the newly founded F.F.N.C. (French Flag Nursing Corps). She did for the corps what registration should do for the State. Knowing the value of each certificate, she was able to make a very wise and careful selection of nurses, and the French Minister, in his written thanks to the writer of this article for her work, extended his grateful thanks to the lady who had chosen the nurses with such skill.

And so, by the end of September 1914, a group of nurses headed by Miss Haswell, who is now Matron-in-Chief and technical adviser to the founder of the corps, began their work in France. They were all highly qualified women, with the real pioneer spirit, and each had promised before leaving her native shores to put up with all the discomforts that war must inevitably bring in its train. It was as well to prepare them for the worst—they would be satisfied then when circumstances placed

them barely within the happy means of comfort.

The salaries offered to the nurses by the French Government were those given to their own nurses in the military hospitals—1040 francs a year salary and 100 francs for uniform. Added to this, they had not the 'allowances' and, what is still more important, the status given to the nurses in the British Army. The fact that their services were paid made their situation far more difficult, and for a while less appreciated, than it should have been. In the long run, however, it has proved to the French that a woman can be a lady although she accepts a salary, and that when labour is the fruit of years of scientific training it is worth paying for and must be paid.

When the nurses first arrived in France it was perhaps a little astonishing to them to find how few doctors and patients had the least idea what trained nurses were, either socially or professionally. It was the duty then of the writer of this article—as Directrice-Générale of the corps—to go to

the various hospitals where it was decided that nurses should be sent and explain to the doctors why the nurses had come, what they could do, and how they were to be treated.

It is true, doctors coming from Paris and big towns like Lyons and Bordeaux knew a few of the qualities of the British nurse. Our nurses, however, who were to fill the gaps in the French temporary military hospitals were more often than not placed under the orders of doctors with small general practices and mobilized for the war.

But what wild speculations were made about the nurses! What naïve questions were asked!

"Has she all her diplomas, that fresh-faced young girl?" asked a very prim old nun. Wishing to make the most of 'the young girl,' aged thirty-six, to the long list of her qualifications was added, "And she is a midwife!"

"A midwife!" exclaimed the nun. "Then she's married!"

"Oh, no!"

The nun threw up her hands in horror, then crossed herself.

"And what are those badges they wear on their breasts?" asked another nun.

"The badges of their school, their diplomas, as it were," was the explanation given to her.

She thought for a while, then sighed with self-satisfaction. "Our religion, thank God, teaches us modesty. We have diplomas too, but we do not wear them round our necks."

They were the best of friends, however, and worked together in perfect harmony as soon as the nuns understood that our nurses had come to France to help and not as a preliminary to more persecution.

There is, it might also be added, a very widespread belief among the soldiers and some of the doctors that our nurses belong to some religious order, the word 'sister' perhaps being the origin of the idea.

Said the washerwoman to one of the sisters, who asked her to starch her white waist-belt: "But will it not hurt your head?"

"My head?" she exclaimed, looking puzzled.

"You wear that round your head like the French nuns, do you not!" added the astonished washerwoman.

"Are you allowed to marry?" a soldier asked a very pretty sister.

"No, it is strictly forbidden," she wisely replied. And—who knows?—perhaps the supposition that they were nuns is the reason why even our young and pretty sisters have been able to live in barracks with the French soldiers, without the least possible need of alarm.

One of our sisters was conversing with a French Red Cross lady.

"But what do you do in peace-time?" asked the Red Cross lady.

The nurse explained.

"Is it the chief of your Society who has instituted that curiously hideous costume? And why is it so hideous?" (The sister herself volunteered the suggestion that she could pass for a Biblewoman anywhere on the face of the globe.)

"It is to find out whether we love our pro-

fession or not," explained the nurse; "if we really love it, we will be nurses in spite of the costume."

"Then you do belong to a religious order," concluded the Red Cross lady.

It is true that the nurse's bonnet, which looks so charming in England, where its meaning is recognized, is all out of focus in France and looks like a broken accent once it has crossed the Channel, and we have now modified it considerably. The costume, no doubt, helped the inhabitants of a village in the north of France to form their own conclusions with regard to the sisters. The suggestion that they must be suffragettes was handed all round the village. Suffragettes! The horror of it! Suffragettes were wild women who, when they could not get their own way, burnt your houses; women who had come to work in France because the British would not have them. From the cut of their bonnet, too, others had attached them to the Salvation Army—a movement, semi-hooligan and anti-Catholic as they regard it, whose wonderful work in East London is totally undervalued

in France. Certainly no certificates of popularity to offer our nurses!

Said one kind doctor to whom the nurses' situation had been explained at length: "I shall be very kind to them." He paused. "A broken heart?" he added.

"But they are not broken-hearted," it was said.

"You may rely on my professional discretion," he went on. "I understand they have taken to this work of charity because they cannot get married."

To the nurse who had nursed him so devotedly said a grateful soldier: "Here is twopence-ha'penny for you. If I could afford more, I would give you more." And before the fact that the sister not only refused the tip but paid for all kinds of luxuries out of her small income the poor soldiers were nonplussed.

"They are not servants," argued one soldier to his comrade. "Nor are they ladies," replied the comrade, "because they are paid."

"But perhaps things are different in England," urged his companion. "England is a

wonderful country, and ladies are to be found doing strange work."

Said a doctor, referring to one of our sisters, a great-niece of a British peer: "One would almost imagine she was a lady." The usual lengthy explanation followed. "Ah, I understand," he replied; "the masculine of sister is a pastor."

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Our nurses began their work in the Normandy and Gironde districts, but when, as a result of having to rush to arms without the preliminary precaution of inoculation, the poor French soldiers had fallen victims to typhoid and spotted fever, many of our nurses were moved up to the little temporary hospitals along the Front and did splendid work, particularly among those patients left to the care of the orderlies.

There are nurses, of course, who, with the highest possible credentials, could not succeed at this work. Too long have they reigned as queens in the comfortable wards of their own hospitals, given their superiors the rigid obedience they expected from their inferiors,

going the round of a clock, and with the same narrow outlook.

The most successful of our nurses have been those who have the patience of Job wrapped up in a keen sense of humour. They have also a determination to succeed coupled with a determination not to be shocked at Continental ways and manners, introducing British methods and getting their own way 'unnoticed.' Finally they have to be prepared to act in turn the part of matron, theatre sister, probationer, sempstress, and charwoman, improvising their utensils as they go along. Jubilee nursing is splendid preparation for this work.

A large hospital had been opened in the Gironde district, and the French War Minister, anxious to test the value of skilled nursing by comparison, decided that there should be a staff of French doctors and orderlies with British nurses.

The Directrice-Générale went to help in the organization of the hospital. She spoke of a matron as a matter of course, but the Colonel threw up his hands in horror at the suggestion

of a matron. "*Jamais, jamais!*" he exclaimed; he himself would be responsible for the nursing, and each nurse should come to him for her orders. At the end of two and a half hours' coaxing and persuading and kindly bullying, however, the Directrice-Générale got her own way, and the matron idea was accepted, "not because there was any sense in it," added the Colonel, but "because he did not wish to contradict a lady." So Miss Haswell was installed as matron, and very soon the nursing was running smoothly on English lines. And the Colonel? Having had time to sample the value of the arrangement which deprived him of all worry, and at the same time worked so well, he became a kind of glorious pioneer in the eyes of his *confrères*. "Why does my hospital work so well?" he echoed in answer to their query. "Because I am working with a very reasonable woman, who at once saw the value of my idea of appointing a matron."

How interesting it is to see a hospital growing gradually! How satisfying after months of waiting finally to get your chance and be

appreciated! The suggestion that the sisters should be allowed in the operating theatre was treated the same as the suggestion about the matron. The sisters said nothing, only waited. Then there were dark moments when even they threatened to lose patience at the sudden discovery of empty beds, and patients having had quite serious operations being borne, or even walking, back to their beds. Then again there were hours of explanation with the kindly Colonel, during which time every subject that could interest him was discussed, and the little bit of business, the object of the conversation, popped in as an afterthought.

"Yes, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the sisters should be allowed into the theatre to see what happens to their patients," he finally decided, "but they must only be spectators. The medical students, aided by the orderlies, are quite able to help the surgeon operate." Then followed more patient waiting, until one day the sisters were asked to assist. A very handy ploughboy had taken upon himself to tell an erstwhile matron (who had

taken a six months' *congé* from her hospital to 'do her bit') what instruments to use and how to use them. She found her lesson very amusing, and the operation began. From that time the theatre has been run by the sisters.

Looking back at our two and a half years' hard work, and now face to face with the fact that the doctors consider our nurses indispensable, remembering also that the French Government, in order to increase its number of nurses, has instituted a corps of its own, this difficult beginning reads like exaggeration. Had we predicted at first that our 'hospital' would be used as a kind of training college for the French nurses, that our sisters would be in charge and give lectures to the French nurses on British nursing in French, we should have been considered suitable candidates for the madhouse. Yet anything may happen in war-time!

It is no use pretending that our sisters' work has been easy. In the dark dawn of their *début* they seemed to have everything against them, and for them only a very faint glimmer of hope that one day they would be understood —one day they would be allowed to do what

their whole being was crying out to do, to nurse the patients, to ease their pain, to make them comfortable, to prevent the terrible bed-sores, work which even the most expert doctors considered indispensable. And the day came.

But the thorny path bristling with difficulties had to be trodden down. There was the difference of race, language, temperament, religion, a thorough ignorance of the nurse's professional capacity, situations that had to be explained away, and before which the founder of the corps, the happy possessor of two Motherlands, England and France, stood almost in despair.

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Although the sacrifices the nurses have made in going to France are great, the educational reward they will obtain from this experience will be even more appreciated as time goes on. To learn a new language, to become acquainted with a new civilization, to be able to take back to their homes and work some of the fine culture and spirit of France, for this alone their work was worth while.

Besides, in the world of science and medicine

there is a gold-mine of knowledge to be acquired from France. French chemistry is the first in the world. It was not organized nor sufficiently protected against the Barbarians, who have never hesitated to steal and utilize French genius, so Germany wears the laurels for chemistry which should adorn the great thinking head of France. French surgery is at all times daring; during the war what has it not attempted and achieved! French science, too, is enterprising, and tests the value of all new ideas and treatments. The English nurses, it is true, have seconded the doctors well. When once the sisters got over the *amour-propre* wounds caused by the doctor giving simple orders and then seeing for himself if his orders had been carried out to the letter, they gradually understood and trusted one another. "With nurses assisting me, who know their profession from A to Z, I have not even to think of giving orders or any details. I have done ten times more work than I could have done in the ordinary way." So writes a French major from the Front. One can so well appreciate his argument. "The nursing

sister, however, needs no gratitude," it is said; "her work is its own reward." In England, do we not just a little overdo this attitude? If the labourer is worthy of his hire, is not the worker worthy of praise? And unnatural indeed would be the persons who would not be proud to receive letters such as the following. One of the great ladies of France, writing to the founder of the Corps, says:

"MADEMOISELLE,

I have just spent six weeks here visiting the hospitals, and, having been several times at Rebeval, I have met the English sisters who are nursing the typhoid patients with so much devotion. Allow me, Mademoiselle, to speak to you of all the admiration that we Frenchwomen feel for these ladies who have left their country, their family, and their home in order to devote themselves to the soldiers of France. The gratitude of the patients is touching, and they are unanimous in expressing their admiration and their affection. The doctors, on their side, have spoken to me of the great services which their English nurses are rendering,

thanks to their technical knowledge, their discipline, and their indefatigable devotion. All the patients who leave the first division of the Hospital Rebeval can congratulate themselves on the excellent treatment they have received. How many patients, dangerously ill, have been saved, thanks to the devotion and intelligent care they have received from their nurses!

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle, for thus writing to you, but I wanted to tell you how much the work of which you are the founder is useful and renders invaluable service in the Departments de l'Est.

"Croyez, Mademoiselle, à l'assurance de mes sentiments les plus distingués.

"PRINCESSE D'HÉNIN D'ALSACE."

And M. Justin Godart, Under-Secretary of State, and head of the French Army Medical Service, writes:

"I want to express the deep gratitude of the French Army Medical Service toward the British nurses who have come at your call to help us in our hard work.

"The nurses of the F.F.N.C. are considered by the doctors of our army as assistants of the first rank, and their presence in France, in a number the insufficiency of which we regret, is one of the most touching evidences of the sympathy of the English nation toward our country."

But surely any one who has the opportunity of caring for the French soldiers is privileged indeed. Our sisters cannot sufficiently express their admiration for the warm-hearted, patient, and hard-fighting *poilu*. He is a dear, uncomplaining, unselfish and grateful being. When he is on the battle-field he fights like a lion, and will endure, as he has endured at Verdun, any suffering, yet when he is in the hospital he is his mother's little boy again, and will be so until the end of his days. The Frenchman's love for his mother is proverbial. In his moments of great suffering, or when he is dying, he calls for his mother, and he is happy if he can die in her arms. It is his love for his mother, perhaps, which explains the French soldier's gratitude to the nurse, who, in the field hospital, takes the place of the

mother. Going round the hospital questioning these sufferers, the one and greatest praise that the soldiers can give to the sisters is this, "*Elle me soigne comme ma mère,*" and they write at once to tell the real mother of the kindly attention they have had from the English nurses. There come letters of thanks from the mother and the wife and children of the sufferer. Precious souvenirs also are sent, and medals blessed by priests, which we know mean so much to the wearers, and pathetic little letters from children scarcely able to write: "Thank you, dear Miss, for being so good to *mon petit papa.*"

Only those who have lived among the French know the very deep bond of sympathy which exists between parents and their children. This, of course, is at the same time a great virtue and a great weakness. A French mother, because she cannot bear to see her son leave France, will cripple his best interests by preventing his leaving France, as Englishmen leave England to better their own position and make England great.

Knowing, then, the great love that binds

the Frenchman to his family, how one's heart goes out to him in his moments of terrible anguish! His greatest sorrow undoubtedly is that he has no idea where his family is or whether they are dead or living, suffering—disgraced. What may or may not happen to the inhabitants of the invaded districts in German hands? "Year in, year out, this awful, awful waiting," writes a poor lonely soldier. "I am going now to Verdun; perhaps I shall never return. May I beg of you, if you hear I have fallen, to do your best to find my poor old mother. Dear, sweet, loving mother, may God protect her wherever she may be. . . ."

These letters are letters written with blood; unending sorrow and anguish are expressed in these primitive outpourings. To these men our nurses have become 'godmothers,' supplementing their pay of twopence-halfpenny a day by sending them useful little things, and, above all, writing in answer to their letters. And even in this the unselfishness of the *poilu* flames out again; often he will write to his 'godmother' and draw her attention

to a comrade and suggest, if it is not possible to adopt both, that the comrade "is more worthy of interest, because he has suffered more."

There is nothing the soldier will not do for his English nurse. He brings her flowers and all kinds of little souvenirs. One day a nurse had casually said she liked cats. What was her surprise when her patients, those of them who were active enough to get about, proceeded to collect cats in the village and bring them to her. She said it was curious to see them opening the door of her ward and quietly putting in a cat, preferably a black cat for luck.

Perhaps a few extracts from nurses' letters will give some idea of what nursing has been at the Front.

"It's perfectly wonderful our being here," writes a sister from the war zone, "and we are all most happy in having our heart's desire—real hard work where we are really needed. Our hospital was originally a school. In August it was made into a hospital, and later a typhoid hospital. Of course, there are no

conveniences, such as drain-pipes. . . . We've been instituting fresh air and washing the patients, and they all take to it delightfully. I've been having a glorious morning—cutting all their toe-nails and combing their hair with a fine comb. There is nothing to wash them with, so I've sacrificed one of my 'nighties' and borrowed a very decrepit pail from a woman in the village. We've been struggling to prevent the bad cases from walking about. Up to now they've all been allowed to get out of bed—delirious ones and all."

Writing from a barge which transports the very badly wounded along a canal instead of sending them by a road all cut up with shells, says a sister: "We were moored for the night at D—— while the last big air-raid was going on. It was truly awful. I'd sooner go through any bombardment than that again. I was watching out of my skylight. We were just between the station and the petrol tanks and had many narrow escapes. Eight bombs fell in the field opposite us (aimed at the petrol), two more later on the line, and two barges close to us were sunk.

"A '75' fell through the roof of an inn exactly opposite us, but fortunately did not explode, and again the following day a bomb fell within twenty yards of us and did not explode. We seem to have a charmed existence."

"This [typhoid hospital] is certainly a weird place at night," writes another nurse; "150 patients in this block and only three orderlies and one of ourselves on duty. Several men are delirious, and it is a constant chasing from one ward to the other to stuff them into their little beds."

Yet another sister had been nursing typhoid for many weeks and was tired beyond description. After some difficulty with a particularly lazy orderly, who would not understand her French and had emptied the bath-water into the drinking-water cistern, she sat down with a sob and said: "I must go home. I can't stand it any longer; it's too awful." Hearing this, however, one of the soldiers put his head down under the clothes and sobbed like a child. "So, of course," said the nurse, "I couldn't go. If we are as useful as that

no sacrifice is too great to make for the soldiers."

Again, from the western zone another sister writes :

" On the 23rd of October 277 men suffering from poisonous gas were admitted after a few hours' notice. It was quite the worst experience we have had during the months we have been here. Nothing can describe the scene ; one must be there to realize the horror of seeing men in the pitiable condition they were in, all more or less fighting for breath, with faces blue, and eyes staring out of their heads, some begging to be put out of their agony. Unfortunately the journey in the motor ambulances had proved too much for some of them, and they were either found dead in the ambulances or died before they could be put to bed. As the stretchers kept coming in one after another we could but take them for treatment and see first to the worst cases.

" We lost fifteen the first night and ten the next, and gradually the number was increased to thirty-four. There are still many in a critical condition. It has been a most sad

and trying experience. May the world be saved from Germany and her Kultur!"

Taken from the note-book of the founder of the F.F.N.C.:

"It was once a school-house; it is now a hospital, and a yellow flag floats over it. Most of the patients have typhoid fever and are very ill. Yet what an interesting hospital! There are no luxuries, it is true, but who would change this charming primitive establishment for the grandest hospital in the land?

"On regular rows of deal beds—all have been made by the village carpenters—poor sick men are lying. The mattresses are stuffed with straw and sewn up by the village carpenters, who earn three francs per bed, counting their material.

"The patients have taken kindly to the open window. They are all washed and brushed up, and their blue nightingales and scarlet quilts (a gift from England) make such a difference to the brightness of the ward.

"How good it is to see the nurses at work among the dear French soldiers who lie there burning with fever! Poor souls! As some of

them stretch out their thin, wasted arms to thank their nurses, one knows only too well that their young lives are drawing to a close."

"He has laid down his life for his country! The priest-orderly, who has been busy washing the floors, gave him absolution. The British sisters had prepared him for his eternal rest. His soul has gone to God. Shattered beyond recognition, half naked, and devoured with fever—in this condition he was found. He never spoke and he never regained consciousness. Poor unknown man, who can he be? God can tell, and only God can comfort the heart that aches for the beloved lost. . . .

"Our nurses are working at the station. Here are the soldiers having their first rest coming from the trenches. Some of them are too ill to go any farther; some of them are almost crippled with rheumatism; and still others are just tired men, too tired to be washed or fed, too tired almost to sleep. . . .

"A little town nestling in a wealth of trees—in peace-time it is almost unheard of, now it is an important military station—this is my next halting-place. Every house is occupied

by soldiers, every building of importance is turned into a hospital—pavilions all over the lawns to accommodate patients suffering from contagious diseases. What a revolution in the life of the little town!

"From the window of the nurses' cottage I gaze at the picturesque valley which stretches out to the horizon whence comes the unceasing boom of the cannon. All night through it continues. God, what destruction! We are a good way from the trenches, quite ten kilometres, and yet this incessant cannonading drives one almost crazy; is it astonishing that so many poor souls come from the trenches with nerves completely shattered?

"The nurses' dwelling was the storehouse in peace-time. Now, with their own skilful fingers and the assistance of the orderlies, it has been partitioned into a little four-roomed cottage, and they are as proud of it as though it were a palace. Only the strict necessaries of life are here, yet we British are accused of too much baggage in war-time. It is the orderlies, however, who look after the nurses' comforts and bring their daily contribution

to the embellishment of the establishment, in the form of flowers, and sometimes pictures to adorn the walls.

"So near the Front are cases which need all the science of the trained nurses to pull them through. Men unnerved almost to madness, men who mistake all the male staff for the enemy—one has only to listen to the ravings of these poor men to know something of the strain of war on them. All night long officers are giving their orders over and over again—under the influence of chloroform they begin afresh. How long will time take to deaden for these sufferers the ghastly souvenir of war! . . .

"Of all the horrors of war, is not the eye ward the worst? I have seen jaws smashed beyond recognition—human beings who had forgotten their names—men who can live to a ripe old age and never have anything in common with the great life going on around them; but the procession of blind men, or men who might be blind, has left an impression of the hideousness of war that can never be effaced.

"Here is a brilliant young lieutenant. His

father was only a *concièrge*, but he worked and slaved to give his son his chance. The son had come through with flying colours—now he is blind. He was lying in the officers' ward when I saw him; the ward was darkened, for there were others suffering too. He had in his hand a portrait of the little girl he had never seen. 'Only take off the bandage an instant that I may once look at my little girl,' he pleaded. 'I dare not,' answered the doctor. Who will have the courage to tell him the truth?

"I was seated in the middle of the dimly lighted ward beside the famous oculist. One by one the mournful procession was led to the latter for consultation. 'Doctor, shall I be blind?' they ask pathetically. A poor man has come that day from the trenches; the blood is still on his face, his eyes are bandaged. An old man leads him in, and the nurse prepares him for examination. One sees the answer on the doctor's face—blind, blind—one after another. One dare not think—the horror of it all seems to numb one's very soul. It is all very well and glorious while these soldiers are playing the hero's part; but who will

care for them, what will be their lives, when the laurels are dead and the medals and uniform are back in the cupboard again? In the poetical language of the East, to the beloved one says: 'You, who are as dear as my eyes.' What can be more precious than the eyes? I would not hesitate to give my life for my country, but I doubt whether I would give my eyes. . . .

"And after all, is this not like the war that is to end war? Those of us who have lived among its horrors from the beginning—those of us from whom war has taken away everything, shaken, perhaps, even our faith, without which nothing is possible any more—most emphatically declare we will have no more war. And how are we to stop it?

"The women will stop it by cementing friendships between the nations which will overbalance decrepit diplomacy. For it is with nations as it is with individuals—men may visit one another and make pretty speeches to one another, but the friendship does not count until the women know and understand one another.

"And, indeed, how little English and French women know one another! A little strip of Channel has been all these years separating two peoples who cannot and ought not to live without being in constant touch; their qualities are so obviously the complement of each other's. For too long the women of France and England have regarded each other through the stupid prejudices of the past; now they have cemented a friendship in blood, and beside the bed of sickness and suffering they are learning that there is nothing more glorious than helping human suffering, that between the nations that stand and die for liberty, justice, and right there can no longer be frontiers."

CHAPTER VIII

The V.A.D. Nurse

WE often hear people say, "I wish I had my schooldays over again," and now they can make a very good attempt at having them over again by taking up V.A.D. work in a hospital.

The commandant takes the place of the headmistress; the sisters, or heads of departments, are quite a good imitation of the class mistresses. The regular hours of attendance, the keen competition, the companionship, and the hard work—though that is physical rather than mental—are all there. There, too, is the wholesome feeling that what you do matters, not only to yourself, but to the community, and there is always something exhilarating in the thought that you are part of a great and complicated organization.

Those who work in a V.A.D. hospital have, on the whole, an easier time than those in a military hospital. The hours are shorter, and

allowance is made for human weakness by more regular time off every day and precious half-days off every week.

On the other hand, the military hospitals offer you gold for your services—not very much gold, but enough to live on. Thus you cease to be a voluntary nurse in the accepted sense, but you are still under the wing of either the Red Cross or the St John's Ambulance. These two great societies now work together and have very much the same regulations. The examinations for membership, too, are very similar. The new Red Cross or St John's worker generally joins a detachment in her neighbourhood. Each one of these has a commandant of its own, whom you must obey absolutely. Members of one detachment are often lent to another, or they may get themselves transferred altogether. There are certain regulations made by headquarters, but each commandant makes her own in a smaller way for her own hospital, both for the men and for the staff.

At the beginning of the war a Red Cross nurse's salary in a military hospital was £20

a year and a laundry allowance. Later this was raised to £22 a year and four shillings a week for laundry.

The day work begins at 7 a.m., when the kitchen staff and the housemaids arrive, and the hospital is swept and polished, the beds are made, and the men's breakfast is served. The men who are well enough to get up are expected to help make beds and sweep the wards, and sometimes we get grateful acknowledgments from wives or mothers whose men-folk return to them more domestic than they went forth.

Most of the men like the bustle and exercise of the early morning after a long night, and the housemaids get plenty of pleasant offers of help. After breakfast the night nurses go off and the day nurses arrive. This is the most instructive time for the V.A.D. nurse, for now the dressings are done by the sister in each ward. In most of the military hospitals the professional probationers help her, and the V.A.D. only picks up unconsidered trifles of knowledge, but in the V.A.D. hospitals she is at the right hand of the sister, and if she has

the good fortune to work under one who knows how to give the amateur credit for slight signs of human intelligence she soon becomes a very useful member of the nursing staff. The men, on the whole, are wonderful, and their help and gratitude make up for any of the good things of this life that the nurse sacrifices for her work.

The bad cases are incredibly patient and plucky; in fact, the most seriously wounded are nearly always the ones who complain least.

On the whole we greet the first grumble with something like relief as a promise of less suffering, and when a man feels really well again his grumbling is taken as a matter of course by his pals and by himself.

There is much chaff about the merits of the different regiments, and when a conversation begins with such caustic remarks as, "I'd rather be German than R.A.M.C.," we know that we are in for a stormy discussion. The hottest arguments generally start when the men are all in bed and just before lights are turned out, and it is a matter of never-failing satisfaction and pride to us to find that the

most heated orator will hold his peace when appealed to by the nurse. There is something of chivalry rather than discipline in the relation between the men and the V.A.D., and the occasions when the equivalent of the mailed fist has to be used are very rare. The men take a pride in showing how well they can observe the amenities of life, and it's quite nice to have a request for a hot-water bottle prefixed by the remark, "Nurse, your beauty is only exceeded by your great kindness."

To the new-comer the hospital language is a little confusing just now. Some quite new words have slipped in, and seem prepared to take their place permanently. 'Napoo' is one of them, and the French scholar will easily recognize it as the English version of *il n'y a plus*. 'Napoo,' uttered in a satisfied tone after a meal, means that the speaker has had an elegant sufficiency. On the other hand, when you are told that a pal is 'napoo,' it means that he is dead, and 'Napoo fini' is the superlative of 'Napoo' and there's nothing more to be said after it. 'Alley-toute-suit' is another word which has almost for-

gotten that it was ever French, and used as a verb it is most effective. Some of us are not quite sure whether the correct thing is "He alleys-toute-suit," or "He alley-toute-suits."

One of the more enterprising spirits addressed a nurse in Trench French to show his culture, and when she answered in Paris French he looked hurt at first, but consoled himself by saying: "Well, you see, miss, you was brought up at Cambridge and I was brought up at Oxford, and that accounts for the difference in our accents."

Epidemics frequently occur in the wards. Sometimes it is mouth-organs or tin trumpets, sometimes it is chewing-gum imported by a Canadian eager to teach us islanders the joys that chewing can bring.

A whole ward full of chewers is a most disconcerting sight, and varied are the explanations as to what finally happens to the gum. One novice left his under a gilded sofa in Park Lane, where he had been bidden to a soldiers' tea-party, and another dropped his in the friendly darkness of a box at the theatre.

The doctor's round is the chief event of the

morning, and after that the men who are well enough go out for a walk or drive or pass the time with needlework and games in the recreation room. It is astonishing what a soothing and engrossing occupation knitting or woolwork can become to a man who has to sit or lie for long. With wool worked on canvas the most fascinating belts can be made, and one man took an enormous linen tablecloth with him wherever he went and asked any celebrities to write their names on it for him to embroider. The little woollen golliwogs which one meets at every bazaar are almost all made by the wounded.

The afternoon is spent by the men in sleeping, walking, or entertaining visitors, and by the V.A.D.s in light ward work, such as washing and ironing ties and bandages, tidying the lockers and medicine cupboards, and cutting up dressings.

The afternoon is the time when the wards are expected to be in perfect order—beds not an inch out of line, castors all turned the same way, nothing unnecessary on the lockers, and no speck of dust anywhere. It is a revela-

Operating Theatre in a Private House devoted to the Wounded

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An Australian having his Arm dressed in a V.A.D. Hospital

Sport and General

tion to find how the eagle eye of the experienced sister will light on any flaw in the scheme almost before she is through the door. Some of us, who have always had to go softly when pointing out defects in dusting to servants, are awestruck and much encouraged by the sisters' unfaltering way. The discipline which the war has brought to so many of us ought to leave the world with fewer slackers.

The evening again bristles with work and interest. Dressings and fomentations to put on, beds to be made, medicines to be given, and hot-water bottles to be filled. At 9 o'clock the lights are turned out, and the humorist of the ward takes this chance of blowing a blast on a tin trumpet. The night sister and her nurses come in and take possession, and the day staff is dismissed.

The day when the V.A.D. is first allowed at an operation is a proud one as well as an anxious one for her. None of us quite know how we shall take the first experience. There is something inexpressibly pathetic and solemn about the operating theatre, and the monu-

mental calm of the surgeon seems little short of a miracle to us.

We always feel that the men at whose operations we have assisted have a special claim on our sympathies, and they seem to feel it too. One of them remarked blandly the other day: "Well, miss, you can't be cross with me, you know; you was at my operation." As soon as the operation cases are back in the ward they are a source of envy to the other men, for special food and special visits and the first call on fruit and flowers are theirs.

There is much good-natured chaff about the awful revelations they are said to have made while under the influence of the anæsthetic, and much speculation as to results. "I should go wooing now if I was you," one of them advised a chum whose head was bandaged into a rakishly pathetic imitation of a turban and who could only hobble a few steps on crutches.

When anything is to be done the men are very good to each other and ready to help one another, but the schoolboy love of teasing comes

out in the wounded Tommy as soon as he feels anything like himself again.

The wards, of course, are the most important parts of a hospital, but for the V.A.D. who is not suited for nursing there are many other occupations. As a rule, a V.A.D. hospital is run entirely by voluntary workers, except for a sister to each ward and one or two women who do the very roughest scrubbing. The housemaids' work is pretty hard, and it begins at 7 a.m. The wards, recreation rooms, stairs, and nurses' rooms have to be swept, polished, and dusted before breakfast; then the fancy work of brass-polishing, plate-cleaning, and general tidying up of the hospital is done, and this fills up most of the morning. The housemaids' work practically finishes at dinner-time, for once the house is clean, each department is responsible for clearing up as the work goes on. The kitchen and pantry staff also arrive at 7, and the first breakfast is at 7.30.

The kitchen staff varies very much in different hospitals. From three to seven or eight cooks work in shifts of two or three at a time, supported by a kitchen-maid and a vegetable-

maid. Among the men who are well enough to give some help a kitchen job is rather coveted, for the work is naturally rewarded by extra dainties, and pleasant hours can be passed in preparing vegetables and helping to dish up the meals.

The pantry is quite a separate department, and chiefly concerns itself with serving the staff meals, the men's tea, coffee, and cocoa, and any odd meals which may be required, such as coffee for a visiting surgeon, or tea for a concert-party.

The pantry work is divided into two shifts, the morning from 7 to 2 and the afternoon from 2 to 9. The morning work includes cleaning the staff rooms, serving the staff breakfast and lunch, washing up all cups and saucers, and cleaning plate and brass.

The afternoon work is slightly more adventurous, for a sudden call for extra teas for visitors from the War Office may happen any day, and must be met with grace and dispatch. The preparation of tea for the men and the staff, and serving the staff supper, are some of the duties of the afternoon pantry.

The actual serving of the men's meals in the recreation and dining-rooms is done by another department known as 'Trolleys.' The workers in this section are responsible for washing up the men's crockery and plate, and keeping the dining-room in order after it has once been cleaned by the housemaids.

Meal-time in a hospital where there are quite a number of convalescents is a jolly event, though heating to the V.A.D. who has to meet the demands for beef and pudding. The sudden arrival of a gift of fruit or sweets or cakes is always greeted with cheers.

Besides those in the chief departments there are many posts in a hospital which can be filled by voluntary workers.

The doorkeeper's, for instance, though draughty in winter, is full of incident. Her duties are many, from checking the men's passes as they go out for walks or on special permission to visit friends, to flinging wide the portals for a distinguished surgeon, whose very presence strikes awe into the heart of any V.A.D. who is likely to be called upon to wait on him. We always suspect the surgeon

of hurling his requests for iodine or gauze more fiercely at the trembling amateur than at the professional, although I do not believe that even the most hardened staff nurse ever loses her awe of the great one. Ordinary doctors seem mere child's-play compared with a visit from a specialist.

Then there are secretaries, workroom-maids, laundry-maids, a housekeeper and her orderlies, and quartermasters.

These last receive the men's kit and check it as they arrive at the hospital; they have the laundry and hospital suits under their care, and they escort the men when called up for inspection to the military hospitals, from which they are drafted to the V.A.D. ones.

The work in nearly every case is hard and there is no room for slackers, but it is amazing how well the demand has been met by the supply. The girl who thinks she would like her photograph taken in Red Cross uniform, and who expects to sit about the hospital in picturesque attitudes and now and then hand a cooling draught to a parched soldier, is so far deceived in her expectations that she

soon drops out. There are not many of those, and the majority of V.A.D. workers are a splendid development of the great war.

At the beginning of things the military authorities regarded the V.A.D. movement with rather wintry looks. This is not altogether surprising, with memories of former wars, when great but troublesome ladies went forth prepared to tour the battle-fields with their troupes of performing nurses. However, scoffing at amateur nurses went out of fashion when a new amateur army became a great factor in the war, and when lady amateurs took to making munitions or driving motor vans for business houses to release more men.

Results have proved that the trust placed in the many Red Cross hospitals has been justified, and the authorities now look on them as very valuable annexes to the military ones.

There are an amazing number of great houses, both in town and country, that have been stripped of their luxurious trappings and are now the soul of hygiene and whitewash, full of the halt and maimed in the blue and grey suits and red ties that have become so pathetically

familiar to us. I know of one house in a great London thoroughfare that was once sparsely inhabited by a wealthy family of two. When the war called us all to sacrifice, the family of two dismissed its small army of servants, sold its valuable pictures and furniture, and offered the house to the War Office as a hospital. The offer was accepted, and the two gave generous help toward the expense of alterations and fitting up. The commandant of a new detachment was put in charge, and to her fell the work of organizing the whole place, subject to the approval of the military authorities. About three months of very hard work for her and her staff of V.A.D.s followed. In addition, there were funds to be collected by getting generous people to subscribe for the upkeep of beds.

In the halcyon days when eggs were new laid at threeha'pence, and buns, though only one ha'penny, were visible to the naked eye, the upkeep of a bed was reckoned at £1 a week. A bazaar and a subscription dance helped to swell the treasury, and of course a grant was made by the War Office. The staff

which was being collected spent its time in preparing the house for the patients to come. There were inventories to be made of the gifts which arrived—gifts of sheets and blankets and pillows and jam and surgical instruments and books and crockery. There were lockers to be painted, cupboards to be arranged, a dispensary to be filled, and much sewing to be done. The professional workman had, of course, to be called in for extra bathrooms and wash-basins and ventilators and suchlike work that still has to be done by strong men, but the arranging and planning of the hospital fell entirely to the weaker sex. A commandant's life is not an easy or an inexpensive one, for there are always demands to meet which are not allowed for in the budget, and there are always difficulties to settle in a community. However, it's a stony cold woman whose heart does not swell with pride when she sees herself accomplishing so much for her country.

Three months saw the end of preparations, and the hospital opened its doors to the first grey-coated soldier who limped across its threshold. Since then a constant though slow

stream has been coming and going. The incoming ones, for a day or so, are like shy schoolboys in their first term, but they soon make friends and settle down.

To be sent to a V.A.D. hospital is considered rather a 'plummy job' by the inmates of military ones. In these smaller places the food is generally better and discipline is less rigorous; treats, in the shape of tea and theatre parties, concerts, and other outings, are frequent occurrences, and life altogether is a more homely affair in a hospital for 100 men than in one for perhaps 1400. When at last the patient leaves he nearly always leaves regretfully, whether it is for another hospital, or on ten days' leave and then back to the regiment, or discharged and back to civil life.

Of most of the men we never hear again, for their new interests absorb them, and our new patients see to it that we have new interests too, but sometimes a few faithful ones write once or twice and tell us of their fate before they too become shades.

The average healthy girl or woman stands

the strain on her strength quite well, and is sometimes even improved by the regular hours and exercise which the work brings. There is a tremendous difference in the ages of the staff. The youngest are girls just home from school or college, and the oldest are, well, really quite elderly. These are usually among the more casual workers, who come three or four half-days a week to eke out the regular staff. They are willing to do their bit, and are very welcome at smaller hospitals, where they can fill in the off-time of the all-day staff. The military hospitals are made of sterner stuff, and only those who can give up their whole time need apply for such V.A.D. employment.

The woman who has no home ties and can live in the hospital has, of course, much less wear and tear than one who has to face, when she is off duty, the cares of housekeeping or of a family. A wise matron or commandant makes no irksome rules for the nurse's off-time, and as soon as her duties are done she is free to spend her leisure as she pleases. On the other hand, it is very difficult to forget the work entirely as long as you are among the

same surroundings day and night, and dreaming and talking in sleep, and even sleep-walking, are becoming epidemics among V.A.D.s.

It is not easy for a girl who has lived a very luxurious and free-from-responsibility life to adapt herself suddenly to a rather responsible position, but after a month or so of experience, if she has her share of balance, she will find that the occurrences of the working day, which used to throw her into a fever of excitement, now leave her calm. A very nervous and diffident woman would do better not to attempt nursing, but keep to the more secluded realms of pantry or housemaids' cupboard.

Of course to work in France or on one of our other fronts is the object of most V.A.D.s' ambition. The chief factor which decides the choice of workers for foreign service is health. That is to say, the nurse has to have a reasonable amount of experience, but experience alone will avail her nothing if her health is not all that it should be.

The work at a base hospital is very much harder than at home, for there are fewer workers, and if any of them fail there is no

one to replace them quickly. Still France or Salonika or Egypt beckon alluringly, and the woman who can follow their call is envied indeed. Yet there are compensations for staying at home. For one, you keep the same men in your care longer than at the base hospitals, where they have to be cleared as soon as they are able to be moved. There is something very satisfying about watching a poor wounded fellow gradually regain his old health and strength, and the mother of the Gracchi herself could hardly have felt a prouder woman than the V.A.D. who hands back a healthy soldier to her country.

CHAPTER IX

The Comforteers

SOMEWHERE implanted in the Puritanical bedrock of the British character there survives tenaciously the belief that the side of human activity which deals with entertainment and amusement must rank secondary to that which treats of more solid and tangible benefits. The women, in consequence, who have made their especial province the general 'comforting' of our men in camp and in hospital and in the home seldom reap the meed of public appreciation which is their due, though, on the other hand, unstinted appreciation is bestowed upon them from the quarters in which this is of the greatest value, namely, from the men themselves and from the Army doctors. Indeed, from the standpoint of the medical profession the psychological importance of the work of the woman comforteer can hardly be overrated, its results making themselves felt not only in connexion

with the alleviation of pain and the hastened recoveries of the men in hospital, but also in the maintenance of good spirits and *morale* among the men in camps and trenches. Modern warfare, though it may sound an exciting, inspiriting thing in the pages of the daily Press, is apt to be a far more dull and monotonous business than any one but the soldier on active service has any idea of, and is accompanied by little of that natural exaltation of spirit which comes from a hand-to-hand encounter with the enemy, such as no doubt inspired our men at Agincourt. Instead it consists largely of long spells of inaction spent in contemplating the restricted landscape of a trench or in awaiting the onslaughts of an enemy situated several miles away, upon whose countenances it may never be the lot of their opponents to look. Hence it is no easy matter to keep the mind attuned for long to the required pitch of courage and ardour without some stimulus from without. Boredom leads to introspection, and introspection is perhaps the worst enemy to suppleness and activity of mind, blunting all the fine edge of enthusiasm and substituting

indifference for endeavour. It follows, then, that in circumstances such as those which accompany modern warfare mental relaxation assumes an importance far more significant than that which is ordinarily attributed to it, acting, if we accept the general opinion of physicians, as the most valuable of tonics and the most appreciated of restoratives. No matter whether this relaxation takes the form of a professionally organized entertainment in France, or merely of the weekly visit of some kindly, sympathetic woman to the wounded in hospital, the results of these efforts do not pass away with the occasion itself. Their good effects spread over many days, giving the men food for talk and for reflection and diverting their minds from less cheerful thoughts. Indeed, when we remember the German dictum that he with the strongest nerves will win, we see that this particular phase of war-work well justifies its claim to be regarded as one of the factors which, equally with the forging of guns and the making of shells, will contribute to the successful prosecution of the conflict, and as such it is worthy of the most ungrudging appreciation and encouragement.

The Comforteers

It will be remembered that in the early days of the war, when the German trenches were resounding to the inspiriting refrains of the Hymn of Hate, the English Tommy, who, if he takes his pleasures sadly, at least takes his trials pleasantly, was endeavouring to keep himself to the requisite pitch of cheeriness by the aid of the strains from jews'-harps and mouth-organs, an occasional gramophone being secured also from sympathizers at home. When life is lived to rule and mental relaxation is reduced to the irreducible minimum, even a raucous noise is preferable to none at all, for in times of stress the human soul seeks its natural outlet in melody, and if melody itself is unobtainable, even the most fastidious are apt to welcome whatever is most reminiscent of it. Nerves unnaturally strained regain their normal state more readily under the influence of music than in any other way, and the fact that primitive methods of obtaining this relaxation were prevalent in the first days did not at all imply that more refined types of musical enjoyment would not be acceptable.

The first organized effort on a comprehensive scale toward providing good music at the Front was set on foot early in 1915 by the Ladies' Auxiliary Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association, a body which throughout the war has shown itself marvellously in touch with the needs of our men in every possible direction. The meetings of the Committee were held under the chairmanship of Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein, and the business of providing 'Concerts at the Front' was placed under the control of Miss Lena Ashwell, who acted as honorary organizer and who worked in close conjunction with the Committee. In February 1915 the inaugural concert-party braved the dangers of mine and submarine and started for "somewhere in France," where they met with so unqualified a success that Miss Ashwell's second party went out in March, touring a different route and finding the same whole-hearted response as had been the portion of its predecessor. Since that spring two concert-parties have been continually at work among the base camps, one travelling the Rouen-Havre route, the other

that of Dieppe-Boulogne. Each party gives three concerts daily, one every afternoon and two camp concerts in the evening. In this way all the principal centres and base hospitals enjoy one concert a month, a work which entails upon the performers no little pluck and endurance, for the camps are often situated at long distances apart, and travelling from one to another under war conditions may mean hardship not usually associated with concert-giving. The concert-parties remain abroad for three or four weeks at a time, and are accorded full recognition by the military authorities, the Y.M.C.A. motor in which they make their journeys penetrating even from time to time to advanced positions by the firing-line itself. By December 1916 more than 3000 concerts had been given in the base camps in France alone, this figure not including either the firing-line concerts or those given in Malta in the winter of 1915-16 and in Egypt. The Egyptian concert-party visits the camps and hospitals in Cairo, Alexandria, and the many places in the Canal zone, the desert, and the oases where troops are quartered, and where

the men have had no music or entertainment since the beginning of the war other than that sent out under Miss Ashwell's management. For these men the concert-parties have been for the time the great events of existence, providing food for anticipation and reflection for many weeks, and breaking up the monotony of life in a way which only those who know what isolation of this kind implies can properly appreciate.

The unqualified success of the 'Concerts at the Front' is largely due to the unremitting care given to the choice both of the programme items and of the performers, Miss Ashwell making it a rule to give a personal audition to every member of her companies before engagement. Naturally, for audiences composed of so many diverse types the greatest catholicity has to prevail in the selection of the music, and herein, as in all matters relating to the entertainment of the men, the organizer shows her quality. That Miss Ashwell knows her audiences is proved by the vociferous encores, which make the compilation in the first instance of what would appear to be

an unduly short programme a matter of necessity.

The average cost of one of the 'Concerts at the Front' works out at about £2, or something like 1d. per head when given to 200 men in hospital, and one-tenth of that amount in the case of 2000 men in a hut. Both the hospital and military authorities are so fully sensible of the value of the work done in this direction that, provided the necessary funds be forthcoming (and in what good cause are they ever for long lacking?), there is every prospect of the scope of the Comforteer being greatly extended in the near future. It must be remembered, too, in considering this aspect of women's war work, that the benefits which result from the activities of the Comforteer are not solely confined to the men, for the nurses also derive stimulus and refreshment from the occasional break in their exacting duties. Nurses at the front live under a strict military *régime*, and opportunities for social relaxation are practically *nil*. When nerves have become somewhat overstrung, and work, in spite of its unremitting nature, runs ever upon the same

lines, it is difficult to maintain one's efforts continually at their best without some sort of inspiration from without. Music supplies this inspiration as nothing else can, and the nurses are as grateful as their patients for the help that the woman Comforteer is able to afford them in this regard; for, acting upon the knowledge that, in order to achieve the best results, the psychical needs must be satisfied as generously as the material, she has provided refreshment for the soul and stimulus for the tired brain.[1]

The Unofficial Comforteer

And now to turn from what may be termed the 'official' side of comforteering, since it is duly recognized and encouraged by the

[1] Editor's Note.—I think it may conduce to a fuller appreciation of the adaptability which women have shown in taking up various types of war work if I mention an individual instance of this adaptability. One of the ladies who has since travelled widely with these concert-parties was for many months doing good work in one of the war departments. She was readily released to take up this good work, not because she could easily be spared, for the pressure of work was great and she was taking a fair share of it, but

authorities, to the less regularized, but in many cases scarcely less valuable, ministrations of independent workers. The unofficial Comforteers may roughly be divided into two classes —those whose aim is to entertain the soldiers, and those whose object is to divert themselves. Even the latter may inadvertently achieve the entertainment of their audiences, so that in any case adverse criticism is out of place. It is, of course, inevitable that in undertakings of this nature one should note the advent of the type of young person whom Mr Haselden has immortalized under the name of Miss Flapperton, the breezy lady who finds in Mr Thomas Atkins the best of excuses for enjoying on her own account a really happy time. The career of such damsels is apt to be brief, if glorious, for both hospital matron and men are quick to detect the type. Besides, the man who is

because the importance of this organization was realized. Her place was taken by another lady whose health had suffered from the immense strain imposed on the present-day nurse. We thus see the musician, at a moment's notice, becoming a civil servant for the nonce, and then turning to the work of comforting the Tommy, while the nurse, after a short rest, devotes seven hours a day to work in a stuffy Government office.

sufficiently ill to be in hospital is generally unequal to the exertions of flirtation on any extensive scale, though Miss Flapperton's best opportunities arrive when convalescence, with its accompaniment of motor drives, commences, a time when even Miss Flapperton may have her uses in affording some measure of distraction to the mind of a depressed hero.

The amateur visitor to the hospitals has had much to learn, and to her credit, be it said, she has learnt it remarkably well. Her first lesson was in the art of refraining from questions. "She don't pity us and she don't ask no questions," was the approving comment passed upon a favourite Comforteer, whose arrival is always greeted with a regular competition among the men for a talk with her. Visitors who are given to questioning are apt to find heads hidden beneath sheets and a row of men simulating sleep in a more or less convincing manner. Patients prefer to be told amusing things rather than to be asked foolish ones, and have their own methods of dealing with inquiring minds, as those of an inquisitive bent

are apt to discover to their undoing. A patient who complained pathetically of having been reported to the matron by a visitor who had insisted on his telling her "what he had said when he was hit," and who had been unequal to the strain of hearing his verbatim account, had, in my belief, his very good reasons for making his account of the incident as uncompromising as possible. At any rate I am told that she evinced less anxiety for circumstantial evidence ever after.

Pity, too, is an emotion in which the experienced Comforteer has learnt not to indulge. With pain surrounding them on every side the men in hospital need to have their minds distracted from the thought of suffering, to hear of things that pertain to matters other than war and its horrors. There are many ways of evincing sympathy other than by way of a statement of pity, and though it is not always easy to be as cheerful as the patients themselves, the Comforteer learns to emulate their spirit. A lesson in the sort of outlook needed was afforded one day by an unfortunate Tommy who, with one arm amputated and the

other disabled, found himself at tea-time in the rather comic position of being fed by a well-intentioned but highly inexperienced lady, whose efforts with spoon and cup, though anxious, were inexpert. "You must come and feed me again soon," said he with a smile. "It do make the other chaps laugh so!" And she, to her credit be it said, laughed too, though tears would at that moment have come more naturally.

If pity is apt to prove uncongenial, so too does praise, and appreciation must be conveyed in veiled terms such as will not produce any feeling of self-consciousness in the object toward which it is directed. Recitations which recount Tommy's virtues and heroisms seldom 'go down,' as the amateur finds to her cost, the nearest approach to permissible public testimony of this sort being Miss Jessie Pope's *Big Boy Blue*, which is cleverly written so as practically to resolve itself into a vote of thanks, and is sufficiently dignified not to make the Tommy feel shamefaced.

The matter of the choice of programme for the soldiers is of course one in which experience

counts for much, and it cannot be denied that in many instances effort is wasted because the needs of the occasion have been but imperfectly realized. For this reason it seems advisable that a Committee of Instruction should be instituted to give general advice upon the subject, and generally to direct individual activities. Even duchesses have been known to contribute items that have been innocent of any appeal to their audience, and not the most daring of toilettes nor the most brilliant of jewels have been of any avail to inspire pleasure in their listeners. This indeed brings me to another point on which the inexperienced Comforteer is apt to trip. Best dresses are a thing which the Tommy heartily dislikes. For some reason or other they make him feel uncomfortable. One of the private concert-parties which meets with the greatest success has adopted the plan of a sort of uniform. This consists of a pink linen frock, worn with a fichu, and buckle shoes, and the appearance of the little troupe never fails to draw forth the most admiring comments. The uniformity of clothes confers

almost an official air upon the performers, and is also useful in eliminating that element of risk which accompanies individual choice of garments. Gorgeous raiment has merely the effect of making the performer seem more remote, and hinders rather than assists her endeavours to find herself *en rapport* with her audience.

The Comforteer has, as a rule, shown herself an adept in avoiding any emotional *impasses* which might complicate her benevolent proceedings, though it must be confessed that Tommy in the stage of convalescence and not yet fully restored to his accustomed robustness of mind is apt to prove somewhat susceptible to the charms of ladies of exceeding beauty and amazing kindness. It follows that a merely friendly feminine interest evinced in the defenders of the Old Country occasionally appears to the somewhat befogged brain of the convalescent in the light of something less impersonal and remote, in fact as an encouragement to more impassioned relationship. A wealthy woman who gives practical testimony of her sympathy by taking a party of wounded

to the theatre every week was a little bewildered one day, on parting with them, to find her hand held with a prolonged pressure within the grip of one of the band and to hear a whispered and confidential assurance from him that "he wouldn't forget to let her know where he was next week so as she could write to him." And the letter did not fail to arrive, and was couched in terms which clearly showed that the Comforteer's ministrations had certainly been misinterpreted! Of course it is not surprising that in many cases a sentimental attachment should grow up between these men so sadly in want of sympathy and these women so ready to bestow it, and that both should be loth to sever connexion when the days of recovery arrive. I am told, however, that any little loss of balance is readily adjusted by means of the simple device of an invitation on the part of the Comforteer to a luncheon or dinner-party, functions at which the complications presented by a multiplicity of table appointments are known to work wonders. The strain of keeping pace with an exacting conversation, prosecuted by guests less tactful

in their choice of subject than the kindly hostess herself, will achieve the rest, and many an enamoured soldier has been cured of a too ardent attachment during a bewildering discussion of Futurism and the Russian Ballet. Of course cases have been recorded in which it is the Comforteer and not the convalescent whose affections have been engaged, but too susceptible ladies who are prone to allow their emotions to get the better of them are soon weeded out from attendance at the hospitals before much harm has been done, and very little that is disturbing is allowed to occur in this direction.

Much successful comforteering has been achieved by the women who have placed their cars at the disposal of the patients and who entertain them in small parties in their own houses, an intimate form of hospitality which in many instances makes a far stronger appeal than that extended on a more general scale. But even here pitfalls await the unwary, and Comforteers, in the very intensity of their desire to please, have at times only succeeded in making their guests feel uncomfortable. Thus,

A little Girl dances to the Tommies

Garden Fête: Ladies lighting Cigarettes in the Smokers' Race

Alfieri

a hostess who was most punctilious in herself waiting upon her guests at tea found on being called away on one occasion that the men had eaten of the good things provided far more appreciatively than when she had presided over them. The reason was obvious. My lady's presence was embarrassing, that of the parlour-maid in her absence was encouraging. From that time Mary Jane has presided, and cakes and scones vanish as never before. Similarly, a Comforteer who had promised one of her *protégés* to take him out to tea as soon as he should be sufficiently strong, and who selected Rumpelmayer's as a fittingly luxurious place at which to celebrate the happy day of his first outing, merely succeeded in embarrassing the poor fellow, who evinced the strongest antipathy to the smart world about him, and considered the exquisite brew of China tea provided simply weak and wanting in body. The Corner House would have been far cosier and jollier. Why choose white walls when one can have gilding, and why have pale tea when one can get it strong ?

So, too, the well-meaning but unversed can

err on the side of excessive kindness when taking the soldiers to theatre and concert-hall. Stalls are apt to prove uncomfortably prominent in position to men who have never sat in them before, and the happy retirement of pit or circle may be far more congenial. To attain complete success one has to 'feel one's way all the time,' a necessity which makes the path of the Comforteer a long succession of experiments, all very interesting and of immense satisfaction when triumphantly completed.

If at times there is a tendency to overrate the requirements of the men, so on the other hand there has to be considered the question of the gentleman ranker, who is prone to find the type of comforteering extended to him rather below than above his standard. But here too women have proved themselves equal to the occasion, and one enterprising woman has hit upon the idea of giving up a couple of afternoons a week to manicuring the hands of any hospital patients who may care for her attentions. I am told that this original form of comforteering is appreciated to the highest

degree by men who have formerly been accustomed to the luxury, and indeed it is thoughtfulness such as this which tells most in the work we are considering. Though superficially the thing may appear trivial, even frivolous, the hospital authorities could tell a very different story about it, for they realize very strongly that anything which can make a patient feel more the man he was, and generally raise his own estimate of himself, is worth bottlesful of medicine and bowls of beef-tea. A fine insight and a high type of sympathetic tactfulness shows itself in apparently small matters of this sort.

As might be expected, comforteering has to some extent been made the medium for tract-distribution and a certain mild form of proselytizing among the patients. Such activities do not, however, prove themselves very conducive to progress from the health point of view, and a religious controversy is unfortunately apt to raise the temperature both actually and metaphorically. Consequently efforts of this kind receive but slight encouragement, and, in spite of the increased cost of printing

them, the tracts are given but scant attention by those on whom they are bestowed. So many kindnesses are done just now without any religious accompaniment that those served with a theological sauce evoke but little enthusiasm. In this connexion it may be remarked that even the hymn with which it is considered expedient to close so many of the men's entertainments appears to have the effect of making the audience wonder why they should not, like the ordinary world, be given their amusements and their spiritual consolations apart. Indeed, I am told that on one occasion when, after a spirited exhibition of boxing, the proceedings were brought to a close with "Abide with Me," the humour of the situation did not fail to appeal to the audience in a way which made the occasion far from edifying.

In dealing with a subject such as Comfort-eering, in which individual enterprise and ingenuity has manifested itself in so great a variety of ways, it is impossible to do justice to every phase of effort. Enough has already been written in praise of the indefatigable

energy shown in the knitting and fashioning of warm garments for the troops and in the provision of the hundred and one articles of all kinds which go to make life in the trenches supportable. Here, as in the matter of the unofficial entertainments, the organization is steadily improving, with the result that wasted effort is being gradually reduced to a minimum and efficiency is being developed to the highest degree. On every side women are 'doing their bit' to brighten the lot of those who are cheerfully facing death for them, and if in some cases the applause meted out is less sensational than in others the appreciation is none the less whole-hearted.

This brings me to another point which presents no little difficulty to the Comforteer in the early amateur days of her work. I refer to the natural backwardness of the soldier in regard to self-expression. He may be brimful of thankfulness, literally aching to show his benefactress the sum total of his gratitude, but words seldom come easily. The suggestion of some treat of particular attractiveness may fill him with the liveliest anticipations, but

when asked whether he would like it he frequently replies in such phrases as, "Well, I shouldn't mind, miss," or "Oh, yes, if you like, miss." The mere beginner is damped, but the old hand will understand, for the tongue of the Tommy is not as the tongues of My Lords Macaulay and Chesterfield, and Army parlance has locutions of its own.

Nor does the Tommy invariably comprehend the language of his Comforteers, who must, if they would win their way, sometimes paraphrase their idioms. In this connexion I am reminded of the experience of one of those Comforteers who have undertaken the excellent work of corresponding with a 'lonely soldier' at the Front. Like many another he had found that when posted on solitary sentry-go poetry became an excellent means of passing the hours, and he began to address his lady correspondent as to the rules which govern verse and to inquire as to her opinion of his own compositions in rhyme. She, good soul, being the essence of candour and hating a slipshod line, wrote some words of advice, which included the admonition to adhere to the rules of scansion

and to count his feet. He thanked her for her counsel, but said that he did not quite understand how his extremities were involved! But Tommy, though it may occasionally be his misfortune to misinterpret, is not always so dense of comprehension as he may sometimes think it politic to imply. The patient who, when asked by a missionary Comforteer whether he had been saved, and who replied to her, "If I hadn't been saved, how could I be here?" had a shrewder idea, I suspect, of what she had intended than his reply would suggest.

A good deal of constructive work is, of course, being done by the Comforteers who, by providing the patients with the materials for embroidery, rug-making, knitting, and so on, are easing their path toward self-support later on. Already many a man has been enabled in his hours of forced inactivity to learn the groundwork of a manual trade, the more advanced stages of which will be taught to him when he leaves the hospital. The importance of this work cannot be over-estimated, for, quite apart from its economic value, it restores, as nothing

else could, hopefulness to discouraged hearts and opens out prospects to those who would otherwise have little to look forward to. All honour is due to the women who by their far-sightedness prepare the way for restoring the maimed and mutilated victims of the war to the ranks of wage-earners and bring them once again to independence.

War has altered many accepted values and modified many points of view, but in few things has it affected a more radical change than in the regard to the importance to be placed upon women's work in the direction of amusement and diversion. In this war there are enemies other than the Central Powers to be fought, the enemies of discouragement, loneliness, and monotony, and to the women who, by their energies, have braced the men to meet such enemies with spirits cheered and strengthened due tribute must be paid as important factors in our final victory.

CHAPTER X

Welfare Work

MY task is to write of work I have witnessed in this time of war. It has been mine to watch—at times, I hope, to help—women supervisors, or lady superintendents, in their work of caring for women munition-makers. Drudgery has been theirs, patience theirs, courage theirs. May honour, too, be theirs when the time comes to honour the women who helped to win the war.

When the cry was for men, men came forward to offer their lives in the service of their country. When the cry was for munitions, women came forward. When the cry was for explosives — high explosives — and yet more explosives, the response was almost miraculous. Factories were flung up in fields, and the men at the Front were saved.

But what of the women at home? I have seen 500 women working in huts scattered

over a piece of open ground, and they had not even a basin wherein to wash their poison-stained hands before they ate the food they had brought with them—which had necessarily lain for hours where it might become permeated with the same poison. Such things, of course, could not be permitted except in times of national crisis, and as soon as possible all this was changed. Factories were rapidly built; but rarely does a factory adequately provide for the minor conveniences of life without the careful attention of a woman. Out of a house she can make a home, and her womanly instinct can transform a cheerless workshop. This instinct was brought to bear upon factories, and details of comfort received devoted care. Feeding arrangements, dressing-rooms, and even dress, washing accommodation and rest rooms, meals, caps, shoes, basins, bandages, and tonics—little things of all kinds were considered, and the women from the home were saved from unnecessary hardships in their workaday life.

To instance but a few cases. Instead of eating dry and uninteresting food, carried in

a bag and left lying in the factory amid the smell of oil and the dust, mess-rooms, at least clean, were provided, where the girls might leave their food or have it warmed up. In many cases canteens were erected, where the workers might buy whatever wholesome food they fancied in the meal-hour, whether by day or by night. The supervisor watched these arrangements, and watched, too, the prices, and reported to the management when the prices outran the possibilities of the worker's purse.

Dainty frocks and disorderly clothes are alike out of place in a factory, and many a factory girl fears to wear her neat street dress in the workrooms lest she be led into expenditure which she can little afford. The supervisors realized this, and have throughout encouraged the wearing of suitable overalls. No one who has not studied factory conditions realizes how much is implied in the word 'suitable.' Often shop windows display dainty overalls which would prove utterly unsuitable for factory work, not merely because of the quality or the colour of the

material, but because of the design. Great care has been exercised, therefore, in designing satisfactory overalls for use in the various types of factory. For example, an overall used in many shell factories was modified from a design made by a French *modiste.* In its original form it would never have done, for the fastenings used might have caught in the machinery. Even after the design was approved, the material used was found to be unsatisfactory, as the dyes were not fast, and so further modifications had to be made.

Caps, too, had to be designed and very carefully considered. The consideration has to become practically individual, for here and there a worker will say that the design of cap found satisfactory in a hundred cases is not suitable for her. Discipline in this matter has to be maintained, because of the real danger of hair being caught in machinery or of its becoming impregnated with poisonous dust. A good supervisor will, as far as possible, adapt the cap to meet the wearer's wishes, and permit, for example, tape instead of elastic, or a lighter material in place of a heavier.

In filling factories the provision of protective overalls and caps has needed even more anxious attention, for where there is danger of explosion materials specially treated and made flash-proof have to be used, and great care has to be taken to cover the worker as completely as may be.

Gloves, too, have to be considered, though medical assistance is necessary in determining in what cases they are to be worn; for in certain circumstances, far from being safeguards, they are a source of danger. It falls to the supervisor's lot to see that they are kept in order and worn when and where necessary.

In filling factories there is the further necessity for changing shoes; shoe-racks and changing accommodation must be thought out and carefully supervised if they are to serve their purpose adequately.

In shipyards and on cranes and in various other places trouser-suits become practical necessities. Men have occasionally provided for their women workers quite unsuitable costumes and vaguely wondered why they

refused to wear them. But in most cases men employing women for the first time in unaccustomed places have gladly availed themselves of a woman's counsel.

"Do girls want hot water to wash in?" said one manager in a Scottish factory, where otherwise the alternatives would be to wash in ice-cold water or to remain dirty. The provision of washing accommodation sounds simple enough, but to ensure its satisfactory use is by no means easy. What contrivance, for example, will enable every worker to obtain sufficient soap, and no worker to waste it? The ideal is yet to seek, but one or two very good arrangements are in use, and supervisors themselves are in many cases adapting the general pattern to their own particular needs. In some engineering shops, in the past, basins or buckets provided in the workshop have been deemed sufficient for the use of the men, but now that women are working alongside of the men more suitable accommodation becomes necessary. The crucial problem in many of the most congested areas is to find space for the provision of accom-

modation, but a woman's wit can find a way. I have known a manager say to a Welfare supervisor: "Show me where I can put an ambulance room, and I'll build it!" And she, having only approached the subject when she had seen her way to the end, immediately explained the possibilities. "All right; you shall have it," said the manager.

Arrangements made in one factory are copied in another, with the necessary adaptations. A First Aid cupboard, for example, is hung on a wall, with a glass front, which lets down to form a table. It is easily kept free from impurities, and occupies very little room when not in use.

Of course the women who have come to the rescue of their country must expect some discomfort in addition to much hard work; they must bear their burden of toil and strain, of aching backs and weary arms, of stained faces and discoloured hair, perhaps of death, too, at times. But their burden can be lightened, and it has been lightened, by many noble women who have undertaken the work of Welfare supervision in munition factories.

Lady superintendents have experienced very different receptions at different factories. Sometimes a man, about to employ women for the first time, has, of his own accord, begun by appointing a competent woman to engage his labour, and to care for the comfort of the women and girls, but not infrequently a lady superintendent encounters a certain amount of suspicion, if not of actual opposition. She has to move with infinite caution at first, and this is not easy, especially to a person of enthusiastic temperament, who can prove so useful in work of this kind. Many eyes are upon her, watching every movement, and her eager desire instantly to put everything in order has to be firmly repressed, lest it produce increased chaos. She must have patience, and must go her way about the factory day in and day out without expecting premature signs of progress.

There is a traditional distrust of women in the business world ; men fear that they cannot keep their tongues or their fingers from interfering with other people's work. A manager pictures to himself an irresponsible woman

let loose in his factory among his trained and trusted foremen, who, overworked and on edge with the worries of war-time, are only too likely to be irritated by trifles. No one knows better than the manager when things are not as they should be ; but he is apt to forget—if, indeed, he ever realized—that a wise woman can, with tact and consideration, deal with detail and so relieve him of worry, and prevent unnecessary friction among the workers.

In works which have been running steadily for many years a manager is quite likely to breathe a sigh of relief when a month or so has gone by and no striking change has been made, or even suggested, by a newly appointed lady superintendent. He feels that, at all events, she is not going to do any harm. When another month has gone by he may perhaps, begin to realize that there have been fewer pinpricks than usual, but he will not always attribute this improvement to the presence of the lady superintendent. Sometimes a sudden crisis will call his attention to the value of the work she is doing quietly, but it is her aim to avoid crises, and probably the

greatest triumph she can achieve is to have her presence felt everywhere even though recognized nowhere.

In one case where an unusually trying initial period of four months had been safely weathered in an engineering works which had never employed women before, the managing director, speaking to me of the lady superintendent, said: "She is splendid—magnificent! She has just one fault; she only says one-eighth of what is in her mind, and how *is* a man to know what the other seven-eighths are!"

Recognition must come at last, and is greatly to be desired—not, perhaps, by the individual lady superintendent, but for the sake of those who shall come after her. The status and authority gained by one woman by her own personality and tact must form the basis for Welfare work in industry long after she herself has gone back to her home to take up once more the traditional duties of a woman.

In war-time the lady superintendent of a factory, if she realizes her opportunities and seizes them, can accomplish two things: she can help the nation in its time of crisis to

overcome the enemies who threaten it, and she can help to build up a sounder social organization for the time when peace shall once more bring opportunities of happiness. Neither of these objects can be obtained by ignorance or arrogance; she must approach the work with courage and determination, but also with humility. As a rule, she has much to learn of industrial organization, especially with regard to the particular factory in which she finds herself. She has to learn of the correlation of departments one with another, for example; what time can be allowed for meals; what time is necessary for changing clothes; whether workers can be allowed to continue indefinitely on one particular process, or must be changed at regular intervals. Every factory has its own peculiar difficulties. One will be far from the homes of the workers, and special care will be needed with regard to the provision of hostels. Another will be working with poisonous materials, and washing accommodation will have to be provided on a scale which may seem extravagant, but is, nevertheless,

necessary for the preservation of life. In another treadle machines will be used; and in yet another there will be heavy lifting to be done, and it will be necessary to adopt devices for avoiding undue physical strain on the women, who, though they may hesitate to complain, are only too likely to impair their health.

In this time of national danger women risk losing their health not less willingly than men risk losing their lives, and it is essential for the future development of the nation that their selfless devotion should be kept in check. It has been said, by a man in a position to know, that women in this time of war will do anything if only there is a possibility of self-sacrifice in it. To protect these women, even from themselves, for the sake of the nation, is the duty of the lady superintendent. To accomplish this she must know the women individually as far as possible. Where there are thousands of women workers it is scarcely possible for one woman to know them all, even by sight, and she must therefore have assistants to whom she can depute the duties of supervision.

But every lady superintendent constantly finds special occasions for sympathy and admiration, and she who does not rush in where angels might fear to tread soon learns that a word of encouragement from her proves an incentive to many a jaded worker. Her presence is felt in every corner of the factory and is an influence for good. The standard of work is raised, the individual output gradually increased, bad time-keeping checked, and the tone of the whole factory improved.

As a rule, workers and managers alike are pleased with the result, for rarely are evils welcomed for their own sake.

Because of the extreme delicacy of the work she may be required to undertake, a lady superintendent must be chosen with every possible caution. Her position is not really understood, especially by the workers. Some of them tend to look upon any salaried official engaged by the firm as hostile to them. They are apt to believe that the fundamental bond of human sympathy will be ignored, just because it has so often been ignored in the past. They know that in the past it has been

forgotten that, although a thousand or twenty thousand women are employed, each has her own individual life, and is inevitably the centre of her own universe. That there should be an error of sixpence in the wages of one woman among ten thousand is a mere detail. But for the girl to whom it means no Pictures on Saturday night it involves a diminution in the joy of life which would help to carry her through the coming week. Whether it is pleasure or food that she curtails, next week's work must suffer.

It is for the lady superintendent, with a watchful and sympathetic eye, to prevent such occurrences.

The importance of recreation is too often overlooked by those who criticize the workers, and as a corollary the workers themselves are apt to over-emphasize it. To strike the happy medium is a difficult task, and one to which few people can devote their attention in war-time. Welfare supervisors, who have so much to do within the factory, cannot help greatly in the matter of recreation, however much they may realize the need for it. We

may hope for happier days when the whole subject will receive adequate attention.

Few people are likely to realize the double burden laid upon supervisors of women in munition works. They toil early and late, facing with the girls whatever dangers there may be, and in addition they have the continual burden of responsibility. No Welfare supervisor who has a high conception of her duty can ever hope to succeed completely. She can do much, but there is always more to do. For this reason no woman who has once undertaken this work, and felt its possibilities, ever willingly lays it down. But she needs every possible encouragement and support, whether it is public recognition of her work or private sympathy.

EPILOGUE TO PARTS I AND II

CHAPTER XI

The Women of Paris during the German Advance

ALL that is finest and most admirable in Frenchwomen was revealed during the last weeks of August and the first of September 1914. They were still suffering from the shock of mobilization when they were suddenly forced to face the possibility of seeing their capital invested. Not only the Parisiennes, but Frenchwomen all over France, thrilled with horror at the mere thought, and for the moment 'Paris' was the one preoccupation of the nation. Would the city be defended? Would there be a siege? Were the horrors of 1870 to be repeated? Would the Kaiser's troops pillage and burn and murder as they had done in Belgium and the North of France? Imagination ran riot, and, encouraged by the civil and military authorities, a large element of the population made haste to leave the city.

It is an old tale now, and one that has been repeated in several other theatres of the war, how the civilians, especially the women and children, were hurried away from the rapidly approaching danger. French and foreign, they were all advised to go, and in the latter case the men, too, were counselled to return to their own land. Some people who had lived for years in the city packed in ten minutes, and took nine hours to get as far as Versailles. The scenes at the Consulates and police stations were only a little less painful than those at the railway stations. Old men, delicate women, and weary children stood for hours and hours in the crowd waiting to get official papers and tickets, or to take their places on trains that were already full to overflowing.

It was all most bewildering and panic-provoking. Trains and motor-cars carried thousands away from the city, while other trains and every conceivable kind of vehicle, from a perambulator to a farm cart, brought in refugees. Yet there was no panic, because the women of the people stood steady. Few

of them left the city, and their attitude was splendid. Had Victor Hugo been there to write of them he could have said again, "*La Française est une mère romaine*," for she was quite prepared to die in the defence of her children and her home.

There were many women in blue aprons and no hats who openly defied the German soldiers in those days, and they would have been as good as their word. "*Qu'ils viennent!*" was all they said, but there was that in their eyes which spoke eloquently. Their courage, though that of ignorance, was beyond praise. But it was hard for men who were not ignorant to look on! General Gallièni and the men who worked under him must have suffered deeply in those days, for they knew that "battle, murder, and sudden death" might at any hour break upon the city. They had their instructions, should the Germans come, but they knew that nothing could save the city if one citizen showed the most feeble sign of resistance. They knew, too, that in all probability that fatal sign would come from one of those quiet, calm, apparently indifferent

women in a blue apron, who, as it seemed, were bent only on household and maternal cares.

A neutral Minister told over the dinner-table, when the danger was past, what misery he endured during the days when 'anything might have happened.' He used to walk about the city and watch the people with miserable eyes, and try to laugh with them when they jested about the 'coming of the Germans.' "And then," he added, "when my *concierge* taunted me afterward and said, 'What did I tell *Monsieur le ministre*? I *knew* the Germans would not get to Paris?' I could only smile and confess that hers had been well-founded optimism and mine the pessimism of the poltroon." And yet facts were there to make him fear, facts which even now the world can hardly believe. He had seen copies of the German orders to burn and sack the town, quarter after quarter, until it ceased to resist. Monument after monument was to be sacrificed, and with each one how many lives?

There were women, too, who knew of these

things, women of the upper classes, and they stood as steady as the men who knew and the women of the people who did not. They worked among the refugees, the unemployed, and in the preparation of hospitals. They worked, and they prayed as they worked. Indeed, all Paris prayed in those days, some in the churches, and all in the common ways. Every thought was a prayer when Paris was in danger, and the peace which comes with the uplifting of the mind descended on the threatened city.

Looking back on that time through the light of what has happened elsewhere, the miracle which saved Paris must ever remain a miracle. Military strategists may explain it in a hundred different ways, but the women who watched and waited within the city when the Germans were only twelve miles away will always believe in the influence of a higher power than even that of a Gallièni or a Manoury in the eventual deliverance from danger.

The most lasting memory of the whole situation is the peace which hung over the

city. One woman with a pretty imagination likened it to that feeling of security which children have when they lie in bed in the dark, frightened but sure at the same time that a great white angel is watching over them with its wings outspread to keep away all evil. It was very like that in Paris when the fate of the city hung in the balance, and those who experienced the sensation are not likely to forget it. Even the material side of life was not at all unpleasant, and the housewives revelled in abundance and low prices for such things as fruit and vegetables. The supply far exceeded the demand for a time, and the *marchande des quatre saisons* was the most obliging person in the world for a brief moment. She gave you as good as she advertised, and added a little for 'makeweight.' They were golden days for the housewife! She is not likely to look on such again for a very long time.

The most serious questions of the hour were what to do with the unemployed and the refugees. In these, women played a big part and played it well. They organized rapidly

and with efficiency, considering the conditions under which they had to work. There was a distinct blending of the classes in the united desire to do good. The aristocrat and the *bourgeoise*, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant, the free-thinker and the foreigner, all worked together to help those homeless women and children who poured into the city from the invaded districts. They were lodged in all sorts of places, and they were clothed and fed as best could be arranged. Every one was full of pity for them, and they were grateful in a painful, dull, bewildered way. Some were cheerful, more were passively acquiescent, and all were terribly tired. There were old women who had been dragged out of their beds in the middle of the night to set out on the road for 'God knew where,' there were women with young children at their breasts forced to tramp for days, there were children who could scarcely walk to be goaded into safety, and when they all arrived in Paris is it any wonder that they were dazed and stupefied?

These two problems, refugees and unem-

ployed, were the most pressing during the actual days of danger; but, as was quite natural, the spontaneous gesture of the women of France was toward the hospitals. Every one rushed into Red Cross uniforms, and the offices of the three societies which go to make up the French Red Cross were literally bombarded from morning to night with applications to serve. As somebody said whimsically: "It was more confusing than the green-room of a theatre." The upper classes mustered in force, armed with nursing certificates from their particular society, that of the Secours aux Blessés Militaires; for the Red Cross had been the one public work which had really been open to the French society girl during recent years. The two other societies, Les Dames Françaises and L'Union des Femmes de France,[1] drew their applicants from the middle classes, leisured and

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE.—There would appear to be another important organization connected with the French Red Cross work, L'Association des Dames Françaises, the British branch of which was responsible for the organization of a French Flag Day. This branch has its offices at 60 Old Broad Street, London, E.C.

otherwise, who all hastened to prove their patriotism. Those who had their certificates were given work almost at once, and those who had not feverishly attended hastily improvised First Aid lectures and classes to obtain them. Every one expressed a wish to 'go to the Front,' and not one would have refused to march with the armies if necessary. It was all very charming, but it was not practical, and the military authorities soon began a vigorous combing out. An order was issued that no outdoor uniform was to be worn except on active service, and in the twinkling of an eye the streets lost their picturesque aspect and many of the women their ambition to become ministering angels. This gave the serious working women a chance to organize their forces, which they did not neglect, and the result was that Paris became a city of hospitals. Many of the big hotels, many private houses, well-known dress-making houses and shops turned part of their establishments into hospitals, and it was a little bewildering to go into a private house and find a well-known duchess in hospital

blouse and *coiffe* directing the installation of a *lingerie*, or transforming her magnificent Louis XV salon into a hospital ward; or to enter a Rue de la Paix dressmaker's and find the *vendeuses* of other days attired in Red Cross uniforms awaiting wounded where, before, they had awaited customers to buy dresses. An ardent enthusiasm drove a good many women to self-sacrifices they could not well keep up for long, but the moment when they were inspired to make them was the moment when France was at her finest, and the glorious autumn days, golden in sunshine and brilliant with the year's plenty, seemed to sing a song of triumph, as if to say that "all were eager to do and die, to yield their place to the rest."

Unnoticed, wearing no uniform, and without any pomp or circumstance, other groups of women set to work to unravel the difficult question of how the refugees were to be housed and fed permanently, and how the unemployed were to be given a chance to find work again. That great quality of the race, the power to rise to a difficult situation and meet it mag-

nificently, was shown at its best in the way the Frenchwomen of authority organized in those days. Their effort was generous and at the same time practical, although the conditions from which it sprang necessarily made the work unequal in effect. Women of all classes offered their help, and women of all classes were entitled to receive the help offered. *Ouvroirs* were opened all over Paris, and in the most unexpected places, from a drawing-room to an attic, a shop, or a newspaper office. In the big shops like the Printemps and the Bon Marché the shop assistants worked sewing-machines on the counters to make haversacks for the soldiers or sheets for the hospitals; and all down the Champs Elysées the big automobile shops were filled with working women making soldiers' shirts or children's frocks or something else that the men or the refugees needed. The desire to sew grew apace in those difficult hours, and not unfrequently the desire outstripped the capacity. It is quite easy for some women to "run the chromatic scale up" or to paint a picture, but when it comes to making a shirt it is a

different story, and more than one soldier has been puzzled how to wear those well-intentioned shirts of the early heroic days.

The women who worked in the *ouvroirs* were paid from 1 to 2 francs a day, and they generally got their tea as well; this meant that with the State grant of fr. 1.25 a day, and 50 centimes in addition for each child, they could just manage to get along. Women out of work who had no man fighting had the same allowance as those who had, and the women who suffered most, as always, were those of the middle class whose income had stopped when their husbands were called to the colours, and who had no means in their own hands to earn a livelihood.

Many pathetic stories were told of these people, and one remains in the mind as both pathetic and quaint. It was told at an *ouvroir* which had earned a reputation for turning out the best hospital carpet slippers then in existence, slippers which were made out of remnants of new carpet and cut out by two well-known art collectors, both too old to serve. A well-

dressed woman came to fetch work one morning and asked to speak privately to the lady in charge. After a few moments of conversation the lady came out of the adjoining room where she had listened to the story, carrying in her hand a little jewel case. "*Tiens!*" she said to the two art collectors, who had arrived with a bundle of carpet slippers to be sewn, "here is a chance for you two gentlemen!" And her eyes were sparkling with mischief as she spoke. "Ah!" cried the two together in expectant voices. "Yes, here is a brooch which the owner wants to sell. It was a wedding present from her husband, and it is destined to pay the gas bill. If she cannot sell it, the gas will be cut off, and she will have no warm soup for herself and her family." Both men precipitated themselves on to the little leather case, to find the most appalling specimen of modern jewellery it is possible to imagine. The lady in charge of the *ouvroir* watched them, still smiling. "*Eh bien?*" she asked. "I will buy it," came from both men at once, and then began a dispute as to whose the brooch should be, which evidently

delighted the lady. Finally she waved them toward the room where the owner of the brooch was waiting anxiously. "*Allons, mes amis,* settle your dispute afterward, but do not keep that poor soul waiting any more; she is worrying about the gas bill." And when they had disappeared she said with a benevolent smile: "It is wonderful how those two men fight each other over the privilege of doing a kindly action."

There were a good many women in Paris in those days who feared that they would have to sell their wedding presents, women who had never worked for their living and had always spent what their husbands earned, women who carried on little businesses which the war had completely stopped, perhaps for always, and others who were employed in big houses among a world which never economizes, even in France, the country where economy is almost second nature. Such women as these, and a great many artists, musicians, and professors or teachers of languages, were reduced to poverty, or something very near it, during the German advance on

Paris. They did not care to ask for charity, and no one knew of their needs unless they cried them loudly. They wore good clothes, showed no outward signs of being hungry, and the only thing they could refuse to pay was their rent. For this they had the moratorium to shield them, and so were sure of their lodging. Since then their situation has improved, but even now, after two years and a half, it is the small professional classes which are suffering most from the war on its material side in the towns.

Another interesting point in woman's work in Paris during the German advance was centred in the old seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where, before the separation of Church and State, young priests used to study and pray. Every imaginable kind of refugee was lodged by every imaginable kind of Parisian in this gloomy old building. The police of the *arrondissement* were responsible for the building's being used for that purpose in the first instance, and the tradeswomen of the quarter were the earliest to come to their aid ; then, as the work became known, all conditions of women, from

the finest lady in Paris to the most humble of charwomen, brought offerings in some form or other. Artists from the Latin Quarter undertook to furnish a room here and there, literary women did the same thing, the policemen's wives and daughters spent their days there, arranging, cooking, serving, and nursing, while the policemen themselves took their turn in the kitchens, mounting guard over the stew-pots and peeling potatoes. Over a thousand old men, women, and children were lodged in the great, bare, gloomy place during those first weeks, and there was no corner of Paris where one found a finer spirit of hospitality and good manners. Hygiene was not the strong point of the building, and many people prophesied a terrible epidemic from overcrowding as time went on; but, so far, nothing has happened, yet the number of occupants has increased. The brightest spot in the whole place was, and is, the *Pouponnière*, where the babies live. It has been newly painted, and row after row of cretonne-trimmed cradles furnish the huge rooms. Many of the children are fatherless, and some

are orphans, but most of them live and flourish under the care of their self-constituted nurses. It is worth noting that these nurses, voluntary though they were in the early days, belonged to the working classes themselves, or to the *petite bourgeoisie*, which class allows its daughters a greater liberty than do the classes known as superior, and the natural love of a French girl for a baby was a pretty thing to watch. By instinct she seems to know how to nurse it and dress it, croon over it. Some of them were not more than fifteen or sixteen, but they behaved with the dignity of grown women when in charge of the *Pouponnière*.

The kindness of the poor to the poor was shown in many charming instances in those early days, and none showed a wider or more hospitable spirit than the little *midinette*, who, like the lady in the poem, has her lodging on "the housetop lonely." One of them, whose tiny room hardly held a bed, a table, and a chair, put up two companions in distress for weeks. "We can take it in turns to sleep on the floor," she said, "and the

bed must be made to hold two of us." They pooled their respective allowances of a franc and a quarter a day, and managed to live quite well. They never lost their gaiety, and they always had a *sou* to give to a fellow in distress. Other women of the same class, some with families of their own to care for, opened their doors to refugees, and shared with them all they had. It was a great moment, one in which the heart had the domination of reason, and each human being seemed to feel that touch of nature which makes us all kin.

But if poverty was revealed on the one hand, riches were revealed on the other, and it was amazing to find how many people, some of them quite unlikely, had stores of gold in the house. They held it fast, feeling that with gold alone would they be able to escape in case of need. Small employees, servant-maids, charwomen, shop assistants, small tradespeople, and the small *rentier*—they were all provided with an emergency fund in gold. It was one of the traditions that had been preached by the men and women who had

passed through the 1870 war, and it was on gold that many placed their only hope of escape, should the need come. On gold also they depended in case of a siege, and the many housewives who laid in stores of food also increased their stores of gold as much as they dared.

The only women in Paris and the neighbourhood who were clearly revealed as inconsequent and uneconomical were the factory hands, and a certain proportion of the women who work in 'luxury' trades. Few of the former class had any savings to rely on, and without the State grants and the charities their position would have been a dangerous one. Even as it was, there was some distress until things could be organized. The mayors of the different *arrondissements* held great responsibilities, and the welfare of each district depended largely on their capacity to manage their population.

No women of any nation have had finer tributes from their men during the war than the Frenchwomen, and their efforts to work have, on the whole, been well seconded by men in

official positions; but it has always to be remembered that the legislation of the country and the social laws, which are even more immutable, do not allow to unmarried women of the upper classes the same freedom of action as is to be found in other countries. The Church, the State, and the family all combine to make it difficult for the girl of good breeding to go out into the arena of the world, and the result has been that during the war it is rather the married women of the upper classes who have been able to nurse, to serve in canteens, to organize relief work for refugees, and to do all the many other things that have been calling for women's particular intelligence. There is no woman with a greater influence in the life of her country than the Frenchwoman, but that influence is unofficial. The laws which concern her welfare are still Napoleonic, and it is by the practical realization of her talents alone that she arrives at the stage of imposing her authority upon those around her. As a wife she is greatly subject to her husband; as a woman she is quite the reverse. As a

mother she is paramount; and perhaps the greatest proof of a mother's power in France is expressed in the fact that all the women who have nursed the *poilu* say that it is on his mother's name alone that he calls when he is dying.

PART III

FACTS, FIGURES, AND THE FUTURE

CHAPTER XII

War Organizations for Women

THE number of women that the necessities of war have brought into the labour market as paid workers has been variously estimated, but up to the end of 1916 we shall be in agreement with the majority of such estimates if we place the figures at 250,000 for workers on the productive side of industry, and at 350,000 on the administrative and distributive side. These figures merely express the number of women who have been *added* to industry over and above those who were at work in peace-time. They do not include voluntary workers, and they comprise only the paid *industrial* workers. To the 600,000 new industrials we must add an enormous army of volunteer workers and a

[1] I have to thank the secretaries and councils of the various societies with which I have corresponded for their courtesy in supplying the facts upon which this chapter is based, and Mr Thomas, of the Charity Commission, for very kindly helping me to get into touch with many of the important societies whose work falls within the scope of this chapter.

considerable number of paid workers who, like nurses, are not engaged in works of industry, but rather in acts of mercy. We must also remember that war conditions have necessitated a considerable shifting of workers from one kind of industry to another. Thus there are at present some 500,000 women engaged in munition work alone, and to this number, at the time of writing, about 32,000 a week are being added. All, or practically all, of these workers were in times of peace engaged in quite different kinds of employment, or were not wage-earners at all.

To compute the number of volunteer workers is impossible. If we use the term in the wide sense, which would include all who have occasionally worked for some charity or war fund, it is probable that the whole adult female population come within its bounds. Even when we narrow it down to mean women who devote the major part of their time to voluntary work, the number without doubt is very considerable, for a glance at the Register of War Charities shows one what an immense amount of benevolence, kindness,

and charity the war has called into active being.

This same Register, however, gives one the impression that our people are improvisers rather than organizers. We see here almost every conceivable type of war charity possessing its society or fund or committee. Often the same object is the *raison d'être* of half a dozen disconnected bodies, with the obvious result that there is a lack of centralization and a wasteful dispersion of energy. Notwithstanding these flaws in the higher organization of such societies, he would be singularly ungrateful who did not recognize the good work which has been performed by and the great difficulties which have faced the various energetic women who have been responsible for the creation of the majority of these organizations. The time, however, appears to have come when there should be a general co-ordination of effort, and a fusion between societies that are at present distinct one from another, though each is pursuing precisely the same object. Such a co-ordination will, doubtless, only be possible under Government control, and

will probably be one of the tasks which the Director of National Service will have to face.

At the moment, the woman who desires to take up any particular kind of work finds herself in somewhat of a difficulty. There are societies without number—some 15,000 in all; they are to be found by the hundreds in our cities, by the tens in our towns, and by the units in our villages; but application is sometimes made to the wrong or to an inefficient society. Delay results, or unsuitable work, which has to be given up, is obtained, and the would-be worker either does not work, or works inefficiently; time and energy are wasted, and the war is prolonged by some small fraction of time in consequence.

How, then, should a woman act who desires to obtain any particular kind of work? To answer this question, we shall first make a distinction. There are two great classes of women to be considered. The first is the woman wage-earner, the woman to whom money is a necessity, and who desires employment primarily in order to make money.

The other class seeks employment, not for the wage, but for the work.

It may be thought that the first class is already provided for: that all who desire to enter the labour market have already done so, and that having obtained jobs it is unnecessary to advise them how to obtain them. This, to a certain extent, is true, but the class is ever extending. Men are being called up daily, and their women dependents are being daily forced to engage in remunerated employment. Moreover, girls are growing into women, and women are tiring of one kind of work, for which maybe they are unfitted, and are changing to other forms of labour.

The woman wage-earner who thus desires to find employment has near at hand a highly organized and, in the main, satisfactory method of obtaining work through the Government Labour Exchanges. The Labour Exchange, however, caters rather for the working-class girl or woman than for the woman who, though normally of the leisured class, has been compelled by change of circumstances to earn her own living. In the majority of cases

such women would be well advised to obtain employment through personal introduction, or through the Central Committee, with which we shall deal hereafter, or, if they possess a university qualification and desire Government employment, through the Civil Service Commission. There is at present a considerable demand for well-educated women in large offices, particularly in insurance offices, banks, and the large stores.

It may be stated as a general proposition that Government employment is more pleasant and worse paid than private employment, and that the latter offers at once more scope for the able and less security for the inefficient than does the former. The educated woman gets from 27s. to 32s. a week in a Government office, and about 30s. to 40s. a week in a business office in London. A university woman can obtain Government work very readily at about 35s. to £2 2s. a week, and private employment often at a weekly wage of £3 to £4 a week, but to hold such a post she would have to possess plenty of force of character, and capacity to command respect from her own sex, since

most of such posts consist in supervising a female office staff. There is also a good opening for women travellers—a highly paid occupation, which, however, is not very pleasant and is very exhausting.

In the realms of productive industry there are, of course, a vast number of posts waiting to be filled. Here the Labour Exchange and the Post Office (National Service) are the best channels through which to obtain work.

There remains the quasi-charitable and the purely philanthropic work for the carrying on of which so many women are still needed. It is with this kind of war work that this chapter is mainly concerned. Before we plunge *in medias res*, may we remind the reader that, although all hands are needed to the pump, it is not necessary for all to demand payment?

The most important of the societies whose business it is to find work for women is the *Central Committee on Women's Employment* (8 Grosvenor Place, Hyde Park Corner, S.W.). The primary function of this Committee is "to think out and to put into operation schemes that, while avoiding any interference with

ordinary trade, will provide work for women and girls." It not only investigates the possibilities of a more equal distribution of such work as is available through the ordinary commercial channels, but it also endeavours to find women employment, acts as a bureau of advice and guidance for both individuals and organizations, and serves as a connecting link between the various official and voluntary agencies which are pursuing the same objects. Applicants for work would be well advised to take advantage of this valuable organization, and should apply, not to the central office, but to the secretary of the Local Representative Committee at the Town or County Hall or Urban District Offices in the locality in which they reside.

The work of the Central Committee is carried on by means of a widespread organization of a benevolent character which aims at preventing distress by finding work rather than by doling out money. Originally it mainly sought to help those of the lower strata of society whom the war had thrown out of employment, but as such are becoming more and

more scarce, it is becoming more and more a central bureau of woman's employment for every kind of woman and every type of work. Its splendid scheme and complex machinery are kept going by voluntary subscriptions, and for this purpose *The Queen's Work for Women Fund*[1] (33 Portland Place, London, W.), has been created. Every one who sympathizes with the purposes of the Central Committee can help it still further to extend its beneficent scope by sending money and gifts for sale to the Fund.

Another useful medium for obtaining employment will be found in the *Primrose League* (64 Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.), which is ready to advise women, and to suggest avenues of patriotic service to any one wishing to do war work. The Primrose League is, of course, extremely well known, and has branches all over the country. In times of

[1] According to the first *Report on the Administration of the National Relief Fund*, col. 7756, B2, the money contributed to this Fund is paid into the National Relief Fund, but is earmarked for schemes of employment or training devised and administered, or approved and supervised, by the Central Committee on Women's Employment, and endorsed by the Government Committee.

peace it has acted simply as a political society, but almost from the moment war broke out it has devoted the entire efforts of its officers and staff to furthering the national cause in the war, and many thousands of parcels have been sent out to the troops and to hospitals from the various habitations up and down the country. As a means of obtaining paid work, however, although doubtless any applicant would receive useful and well-informed advice, the League must be considered inferior to the Central Committee.

Unlike the Primrose League, which can reckon over thirty-three years of life, it was only after the outbreak of war and in the early part of August 1914 that the *Women's Service Bureau* (58 Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.) came into being, with the object of helping women to obtain suitable employment, both paid and voluntary. The Bureau has since done extremely good work. It has acted as a free registry office, and deals with practically every kind of opening for women, indoor and outdoor, and if there is no actual post suitable for an applicant at the

moment she is given all possible advice and information as to how she may best find the work she seeks. Some 19,000 transactions had been completed up to the time when the 1916 Report was issued, and the work is increasing in importance, the number of personal applications for employment now reaching an average of 100 a day. The society is connected with the suffrage movement, and aims at "equality of opportunity, of training, and of payment as between men and women." Whatever we may think of the desirability of such equality in peace times, the present moment, when war is with us and when the Trade Unions have patriotically relinquished all their most cherished privileges, does not appear a proper time to allow theories to interfere with work. This view has been taken to some extent by the Women's Service Bureau, which has made some compromises, and has been able to 'place' its applicants in a diversity of employments—for instance, as ambulance-drivers, lamplighters, grooms, police-women, porters, power station operators, painters and decorators, chemists, librarians,

agricultural workers, munition and aircraft workers. The Bureau has also developed a Training Department and Training Centres, and has acted on the wise principle that efficiency can only be obtained by putting the right woman in the right place.

Another society which also commenced special war work in August 1914 is the *Union of Jewish Women* (4 Upper Gloucester Place, N.W.). Originally this war work consisted of finding employment for Jewish women thrown out of employment by the war. That need soon ceased, but the influx of Belgian refugees offered a new opening and scope for good work. Of the labours on behalf of these unhappy people we do not propose to speak. For our purpose it is only necessary to add that the Union, which was founded in 1902 to assist and advise educated women in obtaining work and to train women for work, is still taking a prominent part in all questions relating to women's employment. It keeps a register of all new openings, has a small Loan Fund, which is available to help educated women to train for any selected profession

—no interest being charged for the loan made—and is always ready to give advice. Primarily, of course, the Union is concerned with Jewesses, but many English girls and women have sought its advice and have obtained clerical training, munition work, dispensing, hospital training, and, indeed, most of the numerous and varied kinds of work which the war has opened to women. Many of the larger towns contain branches of this Union.

When we turn to consider the position of women from our Overseas Dominions, we find that their interests are fully looked after by the *Victoria League* (Millbank House, 2 Wood Street, Westminster, S.W.), which has long been famous for its work in promoting a greater interest in our Empire among the Home folk, and for its efforts on behalf of Colonials who find themselves without near relations or friends in England. The League has now added to its many purposes that of advising and assisting women from the Colonies to obtain war work. Apart from this the League is also in need of voluntary assistants to

help in the entertaining of Colonial troops, and wealthy women who desire to open their houses occasionally to men from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, or any part of our wide Empire will find the League most helpful.

So far we have considered certain societies which can help women to obtain *any* kind of work. We shall shortly have to mention a certain number which will be able to give them *particular* kinds of work. Halfway between these two groups are those societies which are planned on quasi-military lines, but which offer to their members or applicants a variety of jobs. These societies are not so generally useful to the woman seeking war work as those we have mentioned, since work is obtained as a member, and to become a member it is necessary to enrol, and to wear uniform, and agree to obey the rules of the society, etc. Still good work has been done, and to women who believe in discipline and to whom the work matters more than the wage both the *Women's Volunteer Reserve* (15 York Place, Baker Street, W.) and the *Women's*

Reserve Ambulance (199 Piccadilly, W.) should appeal.[1]

The first of these organizations is composed of drilled and disciplined women ready to assist the State in any capacity. In its ranks are qualified doctors, nurses, stretcher-bearers, orderlies, motorists, signallers, carpenters, and cooks.

The motor and transport section handles ambulance cases destined for the London hospitals in every part of the country, and in Newcastle drives the R.A.M.C. wagons. It has sent members as ambulance-drivers to France, Serbia, Russia, and Rumania, with the British Red Cross Society, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, and the Scottish Women's Hospitals. It has also been called upon to train and provide the women drivers for the G.P.O. mail vans.

The members also do much excellent work in connexion with the 'Navy Plots,' and in working day and night canteens all over the country.

[1] There is also the *Women's Auxiliary Force* (82 Victoria Street, S.W.), which, however, only offers spare-time voluntary work of, so far as can be gathered, a non-industrial nature.

Officers of the Reserve are at present acting as heads of attestation departments and in the Ministry of Munitions, and in many other employments, such as dispatch-carrying, munition and chauffeur work, tram-conducting, taxi- and van-driving, postal and porterage work, etc. While working in the Reserve the workers are unpaid, and have to purchase a uniform (cost £2 2s. 6d.). The Reserve, however, helps its members to obtain all kinds of Government or private employment, and they then receive the ordinary remuneration paid for the work done. Women who wish to take up taxi-driving (and there will probably be a big opening for such workers) might usefully join the Reserve, which at present possesses about 8000 members and has twenty-nine branches in the provinces and two in Canada.

The second of these societies, the Women's Reserve Ambulance, is a smaller organization employing some 400 women in London, and 50 at Bournemouth. In the great majority of cases the work done is unpaid, but there are at present openings in connexion with certain

kinds of paid hospital orderly work for a few women. The remuneration for such work is board, lodging, and washing, and about 8s. to 10s. per week pocket-money.

The Reserve Ambulance is, however, chiefly useful for women who can devote some of their time to unpaid work, who like, or do not dislike, uniform and discipline, and who are prepared to undertake night canteen, messenger, hospital orderly, supply depôt, or motor transport work, or orderly work in soldiers' clubs. This society did very good work after several of the Zeppelin raids, and has supplied women ambulance-drivers for Rumania and France. If it be possible to single out a part of their duties for special mention we would choose ambulance and motor transport. As a rule, however, the cars are owned by the women who drive, the running expenses only being borne by the society.

We now pass to a consideration of the societies that specialize on a particular kind of work. Here the number and variety is so large that it is impossible to do more than choose a few representative societies almost

at haphazard,[1] in order to give some dim idea of the immense amount of benevolent work that women are doing.

It was intended, when the material for this chapter was being collected, to mention at some length the valuable services which have been rendered by *Queen Mary's Needlework Guild*. It would appear, however, that the Guild has sufficient workers, and it does not therefore appear necessary to give more than this passing mention of a widespread organization that has done much to add to the comfort of our troops. There is another society, however, *The Vegetable Products Committee* (Alderman's House, Alderman's Walk, London, E.C.), equally large, equally useful, which is prepared to welcome all who will help. The V.P.C., with its 40,000 women workers and collectors, calls only for voluntary help, but it offers an avenue for real service of which no woman possessing leisure and a garden should fail to take advantage. Its main purpose is to supply

[1] EDITOR'S NOTE.—I shall be happy to receive particulars of other societies at any time. I fully realize that a large number which are doing important work have been omitted, but this, from considerations of space, is inevitable.

the Fleet and the Naval hospitals with fresh vegetables and to increase the amount of available foodstuffs by cultivating waste areas. Any one desiring to help in forming and tending 'Navy Plots' should apply to their local Urban (or other) Council for unoccupied land on which to grow vegetables. These bodies are empowered by the Board of Agriculture to grant out such land for this purpose, and to supply seeds, plants, and information. No time should be lost, for the land should have been planted before the middle of March, if not before. We need hardly add that this most useful committee has supplied hundreds of tons of fresh fruit and vetegables to the Fleet.

Another capital, though quite different, kind of work is being carried on by the Women's Branch of the *Y.M.C.A. Recreation Huts at the Base Camps in France* (74 South Audley Street, London, W.). These women (there are some 400 at work at present) take entire charge of the canteens and Y.M.C.A. huts in France; they look after the feeding and amusement of the men, and they help the

soldiers in a variety of ways. They organize those concerts of which we have heard in an earlier chapter, and generally look after the well-being of the Tommy.

This work, though arduous, is very useful and interesting. It is obvious, however, that conditions have to be laid down, since otherwise what is intended to be a form of high endeavour might become a positive peril. The following stipulations are therefore made, and must be agreed to before any one can take part in the work :

1. Applicant must sign on for at least four months' service.
2. Applicant must pay all her own expenses. These amount to between £2 to £3 a week.
3. Applicant must be interviewed and accepted as suitable.
4. If married, the applicant will not be allowed to work in France if her husband is on the strength of the B.E.F., France.
5. If unmarried, she will not, except in

exceptional circumstances, be sent out to France if under thirty years of age.

6. Uniform must be worn.

A less ambitious but equally useful way of looking after the fighting man is to be found with the various canteens which have now been established at many of our railway stations. Of these we shall only mention the *Soldiers' and Sailors' Free Buffet* (Victoria Station, S.W.), which has been doing capital work for some time past. During the year 1916 this buffet catered for 1,736,412 men, and during December an average of 8500 men per day were fed. The daily consumption in November and December was, on an average, 36 lb. of tea, 200 lb. of sugar, 100 lb. of potted meat, 220 quarterns of bread, 400 lb. of cake, 168 lb. of butter, and 40 gallons of milk. The work is at present being done by eighty volunteer women workers, who do six-hour shifts day and night. There are at present a few vacancies for the midnight to 6 a.m., and the 6 a.m. to midday shifts. This buffet and those at other stations depend on public subscriptions, and are worthy

of all help. The money received goes to feed men and not in running expenses.

Another organization which is working very hard and is contributing largely to the comfort of the wounded is *Lady Sclater's Workrooms* (18 Park Street, S.W.). At these workrooms some 13,524 women were at work at one time or another during the first half of 1916. The helpers are all voluntary, and the articles made are chiefly surgical bandages and dressings, although slipper-making, needlework, carpentering, and the making of papier-mâché arm and hand cradles is also undertaken. The workrooms send their products to a large number of hospitals, especially to St Dunstan's and the Second London General. More workers and more contributions would together enable this important work to be still further developed.

Very similar work is also being done by the *Belgravia Workrooms and War Hospital Supply Depôt* (4 Grosvenor Crescent, S.W.), who also call for more volunteers, particularly for the making of papier-mâché splints.

Another society designed to increase the

comfort of the wounded has been developing into a considerable organization. This, the *Lady Smith-Dorrien's Hospital Bag Fund* (5 Belgrave Place, S.W.), makes the bags in which the wounded keep such trinkets and possessions as they desire to retain. Up to the present nearly 1,500,000 have been supplied, at a cost of £15,000, but 80,000 a month are now needed, and more helpers are required, both to make the bags (they can be made at home) and to swell the fund. Lady Smith-Dorrien has emphasized the fact that even the smallest help will be appreciated. So far 10,000 women have worked at hospital bag making or have subscribed.

A similar kind of organization is to be found in the *Italian Red Cross* (United Kingdom Delegation, 14 Weymouth Street, Portland Place, W.), which, however, as its name implies, concerns itself chiefly with making comforts for the Italian soldiers. This society, indeed, is doing for those fighters in the Alpine passes and on the Carso what innumerable other societies are doing for our various Allies, but we specially mention the Italian organization

because it is understood that more voluntary work is urgently needed.

It also appears desirable to mention another small society, the *Mesopotamia Comforts Fund* (15 Aldford Street, Mayfair), since, although it offers small scope for active employment it is doing good work in looking after some of our own troops who are apt to be forgotten.

There remains but one other society to be mentioned before we terminate this chapter with an account of the most important of the various land service societies. The organization of which we are now speaking, *The Friends of the Poor* (40 Ebury Street, London, S.W.), has, through its 'Disabled Soldiers' Aid Committee,' done much work of national importance by getting into touch with discharged soldiers who are disabled and obtaining for them suitable employment, or, if they are incapable of work, looking after their immediate needs. The committee has been well supported, and is not in need of assistance, but the original work, the looking after a poor family by a rich one, a work not dissimilar to that undertaken

by the mediæval guilds, still calls for more voluntary workers. This is not war work, and would have been excluded from this chapter had it not been for the fact that it is a type of social work which will become peculiarly valuable after peace has been declared, when the effects of the war, of the disorganization of industry, and of the spending of thousands of millions of money are beginning to be felt.

At the present moment it is probable that in no department of work, apart from munition work, can women be of more service than on the land. It is absurd to say that this industry—a vital industry which in all the countries of the world throughout practically the whole history of the world has been carried out in part, and sometimes in the main, by women—cannot be carried on largely by women. There are, however, great difficulties in the way of recruiting women. The wages offered are very small. The work is hard. Some training is essential. The place of employment is of necessity, in the vast majority of cases, far from any large city. What would

seem to be called for is a publicity campaign, together with the organizing of every village so that the village women may realize the need of their services in the field, and at the same time be able to leave their homes in order to give their services. It would appear to be by no means impossible to arrange the women in every hamlet in England into groups, one group going out into the fields, while another looked after their homes, each group regularly changing places with the other. The farmers are not too favourable to female labour, and will probably remain conservative in their views until it is apparent that some such aid *must* be obtained. The village women need a lead, and guidance, and organization. They can hardly be expected to offer their services until they are shown plainly that those services are needed. They have their separation allowances, the prospective master does not want them, and they have but dim ideas of the cost of food in the cities, of the absorption of tonnage by the Fleet, and of the effect which absence of men on the land and the reduction in the number

of the ships on the sea will have on the nation's wealth, health, and enjoyment. If they were told of these things in simple language, if they were shown how to get work, a great army of women workers would arise and we should hear no more of the disputes between the War Office and the Board of Agriculture about the number of farm hands that can be spared; we should hear no more of schemes for replacing the men taken by the physically defective, who, for the most part, know nothing about the land, and who, to go on the land, would have to break up their homes and ruin their businesses.

At the moment the whole question is under consideration. Miss Talbot of the Board of Agriculture is at present busily engaged in organizing a women's 'Land Corps,' for which some 200,000 women are wanted. The head-quarters of this organization are at 3 St James' Square, and already a considerable amount of work has been done toward perfecting a scheme primarily designed to bring in the villagers, but also concerned with the recruitment of other women for work on the land.

In addition to the work thus being done directly under Government control there are a number of societies which have endeavoured for some time past to swell the ranks of women workers on the land. Thus *The Women's Farm and Garden Union*, an old-established society, has aimed at increasing the number of women agriculturists and poultry farmers ever since the war broke out. The Union was primarily formed to help women who had decided to take up outdoor work as a profession, but by 1916 the war need for women workers caused an offshoot [1] to spring up, with the title *The Women's National Land Service Corps* (50 Upper Baker Street, N.W.). It is to this society that the would-be war worker should apply for work on the land, unless she comes in under the Government scheme.

At the moment the W.N.L.S. Corps has placed before the Government another scheme to help forward the recruitment of women for such work. As yet, however, this scheme

[1] Another offshoot, *The Herb-growing Association* (20-21 (6th floor) Queen Anne's Chambers, Westminster, S.W.), has also grown up, to assist in the production of medicinal herbs.

has not been approved, and may not be adopted, so that it appears unnecessary to consider its details. It is obvious that some far-reaching plan is both desirable and necessary if the requisite numbers of women workers are to be obtained. At present the wage difficulty is so great that although in the period February 1916 to January 1917 13,000 women had volunteered for land work through the W.N.L.S. Corps alone, only 1500 had been 'placed.' The type of woman that volunteered was the middle-class town-dweller, and she could not live on the money the farmer would pay. This difficulty will never be removed by the farmer. It may, however, disappear if the Government consents to take over the duty of providing barracks or hostels in which the women can live.

CHAPTER XIII

Appreciations and Prophecies

AT the best of times the *rôle* of a prophet is a risky one, and in war-time, when all the sure foundations of normal life disappear one by one, it becomes one in which opinion gives place to guesswork and facts founder in a sea of speculation. But if prophecy carries with it neither certainty nor satisfaction, appreciation of the work which women have done is both natural and pleasant.

In the preceding chapters we have had sketched out the details of some typical employments in which women have engaged, but the field of their endeavour is by no means limited to the few departments of industry described. There is, indeed, hardly a business, a factory, an administrative department, or an association created to advance the good of society which does not draw upon the energies of women for its propulsion in these present days. To the

great army which has so generously, so ably, so successfully taken up this burden of war work our heartfelt thanks are due. We shall not easily measure their share in the final victory.

And what of the future?

In looking to the future two facts at least are plain. The one is that women will go more into the world than heretofore; the other, that many women now engaged in work will have to make way for the men returning from the Front. Women are to-day doing far more of men's work than they will do in times of peace. It is probable that a considerable part of the present army of women workers will drop out of the ranks of wage-earners permanently. Others, however, will not be content to live within the bounds of their old life. Such women will confront us with a problem which will have to be faced. The sooner that problem is considered, and, indeed, solved, the better.

The women we have immediately in mind are those of the upper classes, unmarried for the most part, who have taken up war work

mainly in a spirit of patriotism, partly to gain new experiences and partly to fill in time left intolerably empty by the departure of their friends, hardly at all to earn money. It is to be hoped that this class when war is over will cease to compete in the labour market, since for them wages are not an economic necessity, and if they work they tend to exclude others to whom money earned is a necessity. At the same time they must have some object at which to aim, for some years of practical independence, of fresh experiences, and of new-found knowledge of the world will not have left them untouched. Some will, doubtless, find that outlet in the management of their households—for household management is no light task, and one which will be rendered harder by the dearth of servants, which will probably continue for many years. A good manager of a home earns, even if she does not definitely and directly receive, a good wage. She is a conserver, if not a creator, of wealth, and her labours tend far more than those of most men to happiness. To others household management will either not appeal or

will not be available, for many an unmarried girl has given, all unknowingly, a future husband to the cause. Of these many will form the splendid band of social workers which the needs of the war-wrecked will call into being. There remain the rest. What of them? To coop them up at home without future, without outlook, without freedom, dependent on their father's purse, yet with a memory of the wide world ever present, is impossible, or, if possible, it is a poor way of showing man's sense of the meaning of the words Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Here, however, a grave difficulty presents itself, a difficulty which creates one of the main economic differences between man and woman. Parents considering the future of their sons *know* that the time will come when they will have to leave home and earn their living, not for a few years, but until they either retire or die. This being so, they train the boys for business or for a profession. Schools inculcate principles of behaviour which will enable the future man to meet the world. Capital is found to establish him in life. With

daughters it is otherwise. There is no sure knowledge that they will have to fend for themselves. Often there is active opposition to their earning their own living. As a result, if disaster occurs, the daughter, untrained and unprovided for, is thrown on to a world of which she knows nothing and which has no place for her. It is a problem, and a difficult one. A partial solution may perhaps be found in a development of the dowry system and in a more virile form of education designed to mould women's characters so that they know more of the world and thus may be more able, if misfortune occurs, to fend for themselves without being tied down to the wage meted out to the dilettante and incompetent. Such a solution, however, of necessity resolves the problem of the girl, the young child, of today, rather than that of the war worker. With the war worker, however, the problem is less acute, since she has had experience and has learned a trade. We must also remember that the class concerned is a small one, though one that demands our full sympathy. It is too restricted a class to make any fundamental

change in our social life desirable. It is folly to fling upon the world whole armies of women in order to benefit the few.

So far we have been speaking exclusively of the women of the upper class, the women to whom wage-earning is an occasional or transitory matter. But there is a far larger class of women that must be considered when we view the future.

The great residuum of poor women who are dependent upon themselves will of necessity go out into the world to earn their living; they will almost certainly, as time goes on, demand wages which will enable them to live decently; they will enter into full competition with those men who, in the past, have done work which the war has shown women to be fully capable of doing. It is, indeed, mainly in the direction of the increased number of employments open to such women that the war will have had its effect. Though the casualties in the field have been considerable, and may become still more numerous, the economic pressure which will fall on women will not be immensely greater than in the past. The cost

of living is at present quite abnormal, and will certainly decrease, though it can hardly be expected to return to the level of pre-war days.[1] The number of such women who will have to earn their living will be greater in the future, though not by much, for in the past most of the women we are at present considering earned a living, and a great number of married women whose husbands are now with the Colours will cease to be wage-earners. The differences resulting from the war are indeed in this matter divisible under two heads: (1) women will have to earn *more* in order to be in a position equal to that held before the war; (2) they will have more kinds of employment open to them.

That women will have to receive higher average wages is almost certain. It does not follow that the work which they did in pre-war days will be better paid; they may gain their higher wage by doing more valuable work, leaving to the more incompetent the

[1] The authors of the *Memorandum on the Industrial Situation after the War* appear to take the view that the decrease will not be considerable.

lesser paid work which was previously reserved for women in general. If this be so it will inevitably result in a reduction of the number of operatives employed in the ' sweated ' trades.

It is as a means of obtaining better wages that woman's war work will stand her in good stead. In the future she will have more scope, a free field, and a better choice of employments, and among such a choice she will generally be able to find one of which she had experience as a war worker. It is not improbable, however, that efforts will be made by the Trade Unions, acting, of course, in the interests of their members, to stop women competing against men along lines hitherto closed to them, and if such an attitude be adopted it is more than probable that the Trade Unions will win. Whether it is consonant with the spirit of fraternity, liberty, and equality, and whether that spirit is less valuable to man than the absence of female competition, must be left to others to decide. To us there appears to be no valid reason why women who work for their living should not be allowed freely to compete with men, subject only to the

condition that they do not use their position of lower economic responsibility to undercut wages. That is a condition precedent to free competition.

The change which we chiefly hope to see, however, is a general shifting of women workers into employments for which they are as well fitted as are men. The tendency should be for certain kinds of work to be almost entirely surrendered to women, while the men who previously worked at such tasks take up other work more suited to the qualities which man alone possesses.

The ravages of war, the dislocation of manufactures, and the complete suspension of many peace-time industries will result in the need for an enormous amount of constructive work being done when peace is declared. The labour market cannot be too full for many years.[1] We must not, however, allow a purely

[1] The authors of the *Memorandum on the Industrial Situation after the War* hold a different view, and consider that there will be a considerable amount of unemployment, due not to surplus of labour, but to the general dislocation of industry. Such a dislocation occurred when war broke out, and continued for about five months. No plans, however,

temporary state of affairs to blind our vision. It must be realized that if women take their full share in this work of reconstruction—a purely business matter, calling neither for patriotism nor sacrifice—she comes to stay. She will have gained her place in the world of work, not temporarily, but for all time. We may tolerate the spectacle of women being taught to use a lathe in order to make munitions and then being dispensed with when war is over, but if once that lathe continues to be used by her in the interests of the community and in times of peace, the woman engineer-artisan will have established her right to continue as such. But neither justice nor policy can tolerate women being exploited.

We have, therefore, to expect to see the problem of woman's competition with man fronting us. It is a question largely for the Unions, and in its solution we venture to express the hope that full effect will be given to the view that there is full friendship between

had been made for turning peace into war industries. It will be sheer lack of foresight if any such dislocation continues for more than a month after peace is declared.

man and woman, and to the feeling that, as woman has helped man in the war, as she has nursed him and tended him and worked for him, so he should help her in the days of peace, remembering that the women competing with him are no blacklegs, but the daughters and the widows for the most part of those comrades who died by his side on the battle-fields whereon was fought the great fight for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.